NEA Today

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A NEWSPAPER FOR MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATIO

What Makes a Teacher JUMP?

For $6,000 a year, Patricia Dudley gladly crosses state lines every day. For more on salaries and border wars, see page 4.

School employees face soaring health costs.
page 10

Peter Glass

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1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036

PRESIDENT'S VIEWPOINT

Accountability: A Requirement, Not an Elective

We now have the consensus that our Association has longed for—and fought for: a consensus on the national goals America must meet if the words *a nation at risk* are to become obsolete, outmoded, a footnote in the history of American education.

The NEA helped forge this new consensus. And President Bush and the National Governors' Association (NGA) have now translated that consensus into national policy. They've announced six national goals—all laudable, all ambitious, all necessary.

But let's not kid ourselves. Setting goals signals a beginning, not an end. The President and governors have, in effect, crafted a course outline, a syllabus. But it's still day one of the semester. And it's a bit early to assign final grades.

We'll help determine America's grade point average. And we expect to be held accountable. But the fact is that only two of the goals President Bush and the NGA announced—student mastery of a tough and substantive curriculum and dramatic improvement in science and math achievement—deal exclusively with matters we can control in our classrooms.

The other four goals—student readiness for formal schooling, cutting the dropout rate, adult literacy, and getting drugs and violence out of the schools—depend on ending the social neglect and economic inequities that diminish learning potential as they dim hope. The victimized child, the child who is hungry or malnourished or homeless, is not a child to whom we can say: "Buckle down. Hit those books. Ace this test. Make America proud."

NEA President
Keith Geiger

Before we can make America proud, we have to make America's children proud.

That means we have to begin at the beginning. With *federal funding* for the Women, Infant, and Children program—WIC—that provides adequate nutrition to poor mothers and their babies. With *full federal funding* for Head Start, the magnificent program that still receives miserly funding. With *increased federal funding* for prenatal care and child health care. With *federal initiatives* that stop, once and for all, the ghastly sight we witness each fall: little ones entering school for the first time with their potential for learning maimed beyond repair.

Yes, we're ready to be held accountable for what becomes of the children in our classrooms. We're also ready to hold state governments—*and the federal government*—accountable for the conditions children know *outside* the classroom. The responsibility of the White House—and state houses—does not end with the articulation of lofty goals.

I'm convinced that we can meet the objectives President Bush and the governors put forth in their syllabus only if we make a national commitment to the future that's actually greater than the commitment that culminated in the wee hours of the morning on July 20, 1969...at the moment Neil Armstrong set foot on the moon.

We need national leadership that will say today, as President Kennedy said on May 25, 1961, We welcome the challenge before us, and we shall meet it before this decade is out, *whatever the cost.*

President Kennedy's charge crystallized our national will for excellence. And it ignited, throughout our land, a willingness to sacrifice. We need that same will and that same willingness today. Nothing less will suffice.

To achieve the national goals before us, we need to reorder national priorities and reallocate national resources. Unless this happens, the syllabus that our President and governors outlined will one day serve as no more than a reminder of what might have been. The syllabus that defined a course for national renewal will become a reason for shame.

That's the tragedy we must prevent. And that's why *accountability* must become our watchword—for ourselves, our state governments, our federal government.

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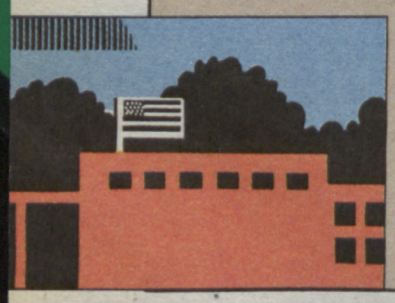

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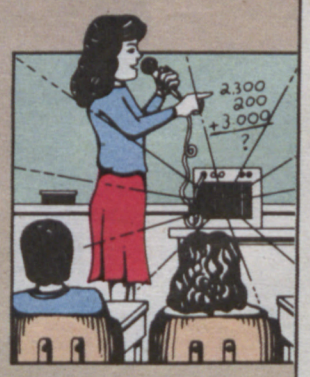

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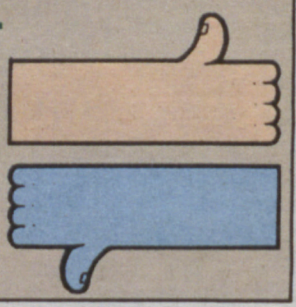

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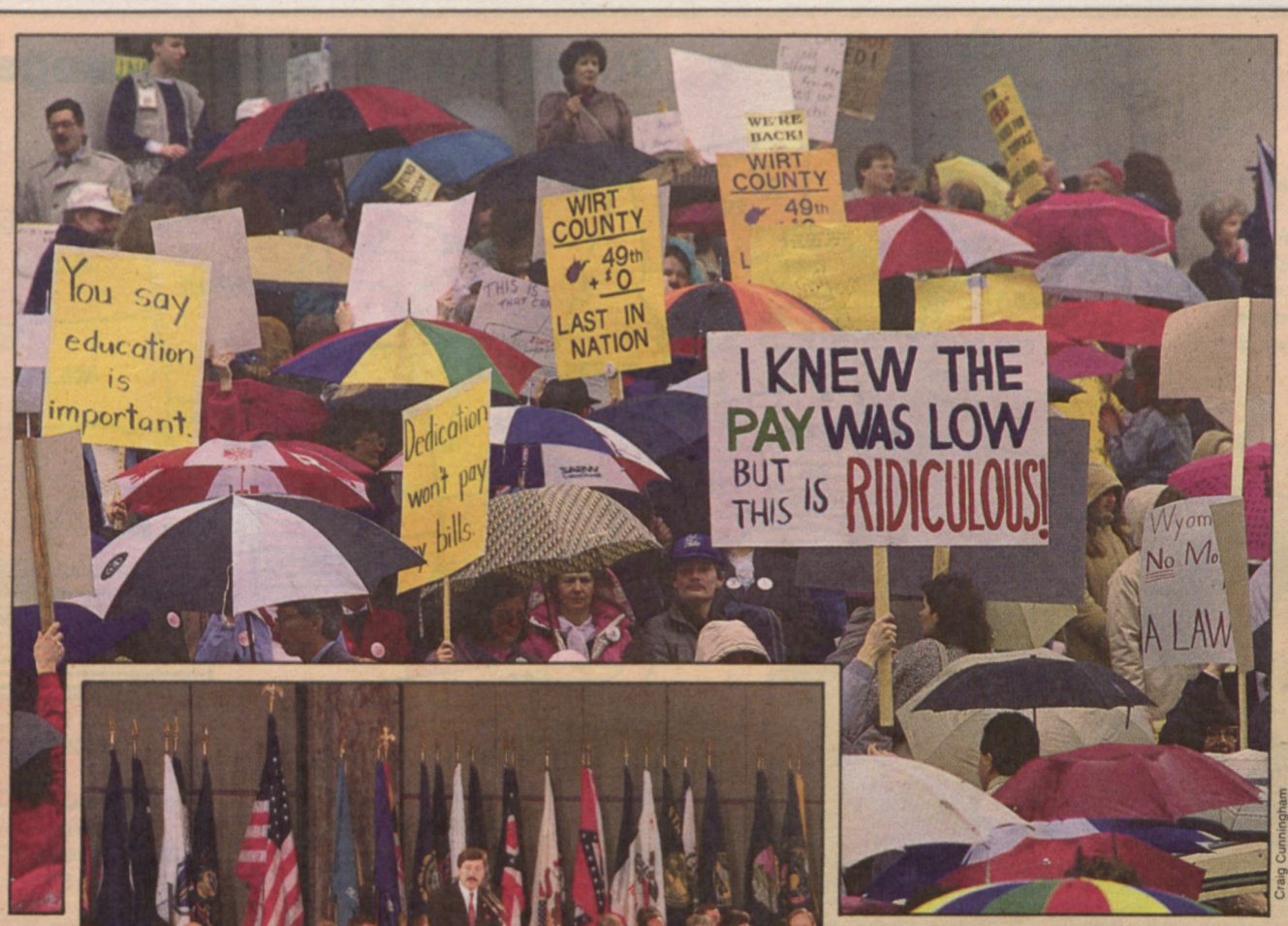
NATIONAL NEWS



Craig Cunningham

Joe Di Dio

Some 5,500 West Virginia teachers braved a cold March rain to demand new school resources.

Iowa Gov. Terry Branstad outlines the new national goals for education.

Governors Talk— NEA Members Walk

The nation's governors have ambitious new goals for America's schools. But how will those goals be met when so many states are underfunding current needs? NEA members are demanding firm new commitments to education.

The 1990s, President Bush predicted in late February, will usher in "a new era in education reform."

The President's optimistic forecast came after the nation's governors, meeting in Washington, D.C., took the unprecedented step of adopting a set of "national goals for education."

By the year 2000, they commit the nation to everything from achieving universal adult literacy to making sure all children start kindergarten "ready to learn."

To meet the new goals, America's schools will also have to—

► graduate 90 percent of the students who enter high school.

► prepare students to lead the world in science and math skills.

► make sure students in grades 4, 8, and 12 can demonstrate competency in challenging subject matter.

► offer all students a safe and disciplined school environment.

Who will come up with the resources needed to realize the governors' visionary new goals? That question remains to be addressed. (See President's Viewpoint, page 2.)

But NEA members across the country wonder how those challenging new goals can be met tomorrow when far too many states are denying schools the needed resources today.

In state after state, NEA members are making demands.

► Utah Education Association members overwhelmingly authorized their Board of Directors to issue a "strike alert" in mid-February signaling the need for more education spending. More than 1,200 teachers rallied in Salt Lake City to show their frustration over the legislature's $38 million tax cut.

That cut was approved despite the state's 25.4-to-1 student-teacher ratio, the nation's highest.

A statewide strike was averted when Utah legislators voted a $128 million education package with a provision to reduce class size.

► In West Virginia, NEA members staged a series of walkouts in late winter to protest the state's failure to provide the $21 million needed to fund the state's salary equity law. West Virginia ranks 49th in teacher salaries.

Early in March the governor made, then retracted, an offer to raise pay without cutting health insurance. Seven West Virginia Education Association locals immediately hit the bricks; most of the rest followed suit.

► Meanwhile, in Washington State, some 13,000 teachers staged one-day walkouts and demonstrations last month to protest Gov. Booth Gardner's decision not to target part of the state's big budget surplus for teacher pay raises. Another 12,000 teachers attended after-school rallies, parades, and other demonstrations.

The Washington State action—like recent NEA member actions in Utah, West Virginia, and several other states—reflects the growing sense that converting education reform rhetoric into reality is up to NEA members.

—Vicky Lytle

News Beat

■ **Drug Use Down** — The proportion of high school seniors who use illicit drugs declined from 21.3 percent in 1988 to 19.7 percent in 1989, according to a federally financed annual survey. The study found marijuana and cocaine use down, crack use unchanged, and PCP use up.

■ **Teen Smoking Up** — The same survey showed that 29 percent of all high school seniors smoke cigarettes regularly—about the same proportion that reported smoking 10 years ago. A new American Academy of Pediatrics study shows that even 8- to 19-year-old smokers put themselves at increased risk for heart disease later on.

■ **Grade Inflation** — A UCLA survey of 200,000 1989 college freshman shows an increased need for remedial math and foreign language study—despite near-record high grades in high school. The study's conclusion: "Grade inflation in the schools is again on the increase."

■ **Civil Rights Action** — To restore civil rights protections axed by the Supreme Court last year, NEA is backing the Civil Rights Act of 1990. The bill will strengthen employment discrimination law in areas of racial harassment, burden of proof, and ability to settle, and will outlaw all employers' decisions tainted by discrimination. NEA encourages members to write their representatives in support of H.R. 4000 in the House and S. 2104 in the Senate.

■ **Future Search** — The federal Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that of the 18 million new jobs to be created in the '90s, 16.6 million will be in services. That means more nurses, teachers, managers, salespeople, restaurant help, accountants, guards, janitors, engineers, and computer systems analysts.

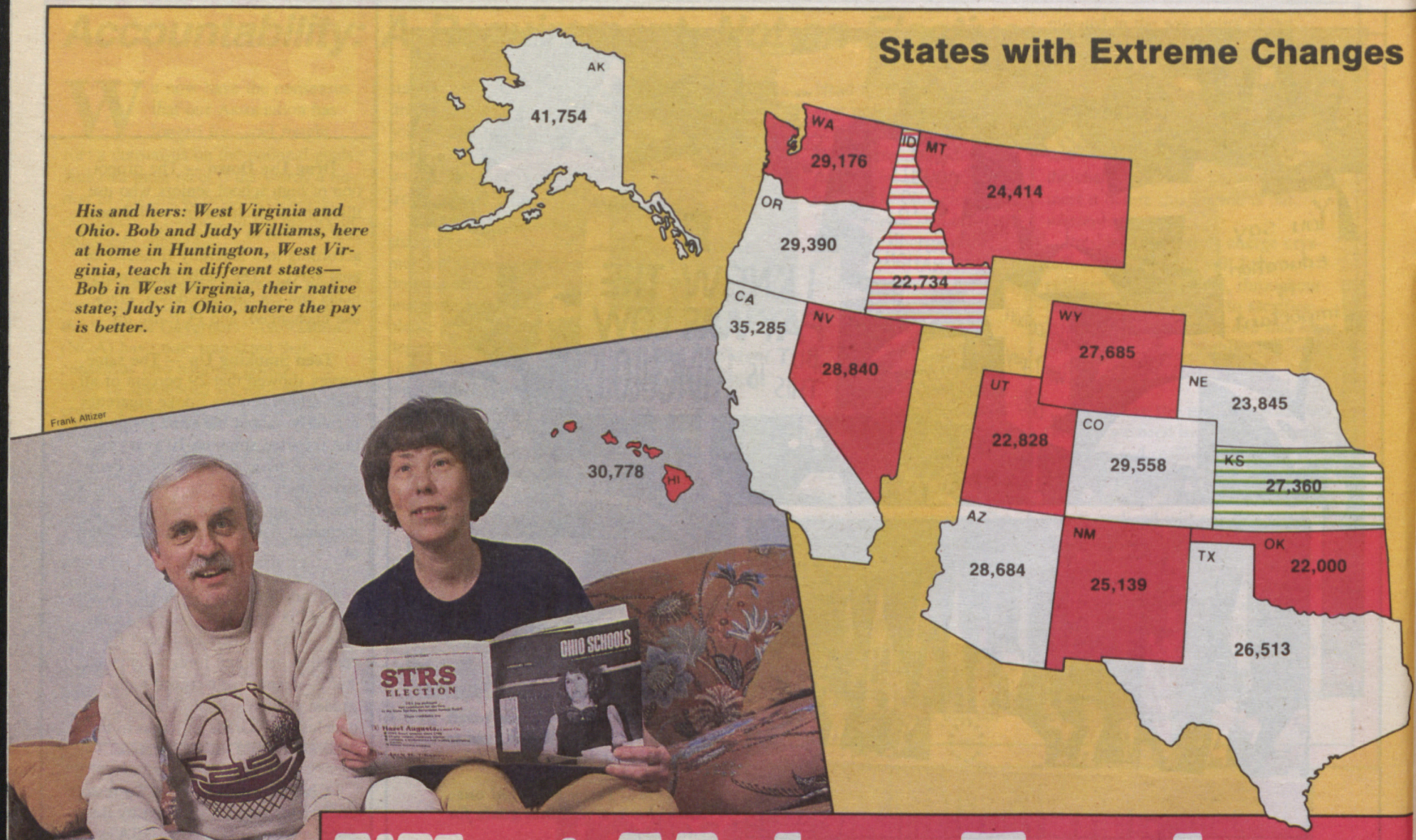
WELL PUT!

William Campbell/*Time* magazine

"The crisis in education that exists in South Africa demands special attention. The education crisis in black schools is a political crisis. It arises out of the fact that our people have no vote and therefore cannot make the government of the day responsive to their needs."

—Nelson Mandela
African National Congress leader

COVER STORY



His and hers: West Virginia and Ohio. Bob and Judy Williams, here at home in Huntington, West Virginia, teach in different states—Bob in West Virginia, their native state; Judy in Ohio, where the pay is better.

Frank Altizer

What Makes Teachers

In the gray light of dawn a figure glides silently across the border: another teacher looking for decent pay and a secure job. The journey's a daily one, and as more teachers take it up, they'll change the face of U.S. schools.

A year ago, Patricia Dudley was teaching special education in her Massachusetts hometown of Holyoke. This year Dudley's teaching in the Connecticut town of Enfield—and making $6,000 more. The difference? A 20-minute commute across the state line.

In recent years thousands of other Patricia Dudleys have turned to a dozen other Connecticuts. In a nation where the states foot more than half the bill for public education, that's what happens when one state raises teacher pay sooner and higher than its neighbors. But what does it do to the schools?

There's nothing new about imbalances between states in teacher pay. For years, pay differentials have sent North Dakotans to teach in Minnesota, West Virginians to Maryland, Oklahomans to Texas.

There's not even anything new about Massachusetts residents teaching in Connecticut: 178 of the 530 members of the Enfield Teachers Association commute from Massachusetts, and most have been doing it for years.

But school reform campaigns in the 1980s—which often included substantial state efforts to increase teacher pay—have generated dramatic new patterns of imbalance.

In Connecticut, teacher pay jumped after the Education Enhancement Act authorized $300 million in new money for teacher salaries in 1986. "The law passed because higher teacher pay was our number one priority in the mid-80's," explained Connecticut Education Association president Mark Waxenberg.

Supported by this state effort, contract settlements in Connecticut averaged 9 percent a year in the late '80s. Between 1983 and 1989, the average teacher salary paid in the state went from $20,731 to $37,343, and Connecticut moved from the 21st to the second best-paying state in the nation.

During this same period, NEA members in Massachusetts were living a very different story. A statewide economic downturn, added to passage of a statewide initiative restricting property tax revenues, produced widespread cuts in school budgets and positions and a squeeze on teacher pay.

Last year, in the Massachusetts city of Springfield, 10 miles from the Connecticut line, nearly every nontenured teacher was pink-slipped. Some 300 were finally RIF'd. In nearby Holyoke, Patricia Dudley's home city, 102 teachers were RIF'd. Dudley wasn't one of them, but she was strongly affected by the experience of her colleagues.

"It seemed there was no guarantee of a future in Massachusetts," Dudley explains. "People in other subjects who had more teaching experience than I did were RIF'd.

"That's when I started to look for a job in Connecticut. Older teachers in Holyoke—including my own parents—said if they were my age they'd go."

So Patricia Dudley went to teach in Connecticut. How many others in Massachusetts tried to make the same move, nobody knows. But enough have apparently done so that Connecticut has begun to count out-of-state applications for certification.

Certainly the pay differentials would seem to make a cross-border trip—or even move—worthwhile. At $45,206, Enfield's M.A. maximum is not unusual in Connecticut. But nine nearby Massachusetts districts—all within commuting distance of Enfield—are paying only from $29,675 to $36,181.

Still there hasn't been a run of experienced teachers from Massachusetts to Connecticut. Yet.

"Probably because so many Massachusetts teachers are veterans," says Bob Bonazzi, director of affiliate services for the Massachusetts Teachers Association.

Social scientists have a name for this tendency to stay put: geographical inertia. Jim Wilson is studying teacher migration for the Northeast Common Market project at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, "Teachers aren't all that mobile," notes Wilson, "compared to other professions." And he cites some practical reasons: lack of pension portability, inability of teachers who move to get full credit for experience, and the need to get recertified in the new state.

And as for actually going to live in another place, says Wilson, if the teacher is bringing home the lower of two family incomes, the family won't move just so the teacher can get more pay.

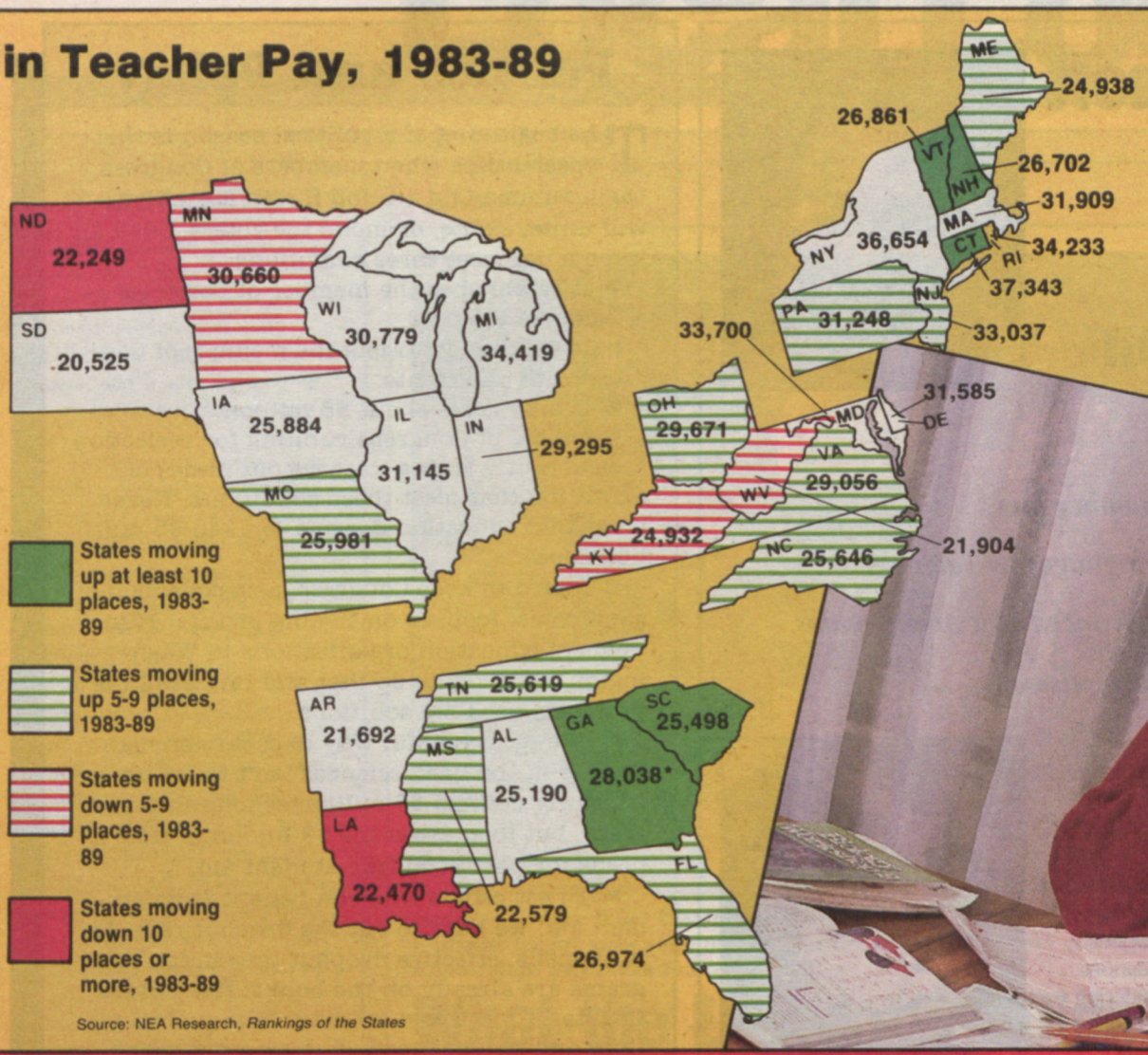
But MTA's Bonazzi believes Massachusetts is in danger of losing its best teachers because of the state's increasingly obvious lack of commitment to education.

"The deficit this year is very bad, and we're going to lose another 4,000 or 5,000 teachers before we're through," Bonazzi says.

The moment of truth will come when

COVER STORY

in Teacher Pay, 1983-89



Source: NEA Research, *Rankings of the States*

Peter Glass

Patricia Dudley was a third-generation teacher in Holyoke, Mass., until she determined Massachusetts no longer offered its teachers a secure future. Now she's the first member of her family to cross state lines to teach in Connecticut.

Cross State Lines?

today's middle-aged teachers retire, creating lots of vacancies in both Massachusetts and Connecticut. At that point, unless Massachusetts politicians have provide budget relief to the towns and cities, the pay imbalance will be a regional fact of life and Connecticut will get the best-prepared young teachers.

The real harm to education and to kids comes when a pay imbalance does become chronic, when a state perpetually lags behind its neighbors in support for education—and in professional salaries.

Take West Virginia. Teachers leave there each morning to work someplace else. One such commuter is Judy Williams, who lives in Huntington but for 18 years has crossed the Ohio River every day to teach art at Ohio's South Point High School.

"By teaching in Ohio I've already brought in $25,000 more than if I'd stayed here," Williams says. She makes $7,000 a year more than husband Bob, who teaches social studies in West Virginia.

Bob Williams is the president of West Virginia's Cabell County Education Association. Education reform in some Southern states, he notes, has meant higher teacher pay, and West Virginia teachers are actually packing up and leaving.

"My high school has lost two math and two science teachers and a successful volleyball coach to Virginia and North Carolina," Williams says. "These people were born and raised and received their degrees here."

"I lost my past president to Virginia," Bob Williams continues, "where she took a $42,000 job. She'd taught in West Virginia for 17 years, but the salary difference was $16,000."

This is brain drain—the loss of good people. The career moves that create it may be solutions for individual teachers, but, for the nation as a whole, they're a symptom of a serious problem: the underfinancing of education.

For the children and taxpayers the teachers leave behind, the loss of trained, experienced faculty is a tragedy. What's worse, despite the disparity in state economies, it's avoidable.

"Some states increase teacher pay painlessly out of economic growth," explains John Dunlop, head of NEA's five-year-old teacher compensation project. "Others simply make more effort."

Like Mississippi. "In the mid-'80s Mississippi raised teacher salaries 54 percent, while per capita income increased only 41 percent," Dunlop says.

That's effort. But effort—which usually means new taxes—takes political leadership. "That's where the compensation project comes in," Dunlop continues, "offering NEA help to affiliates in states where elected officials aren't providing the leadership to increase funding for education and raise pay for education employees."

Some states have been avoiding the realities of school financing by giving teachers and other education employees pay raises so low they don't restore purchasing power eroded by inflation. These states don't just lose qualified teacher graduates and practicing teachers. They also face citizens' unhappiness over school performance, topped off by teachers' resentment at subsidizing education by foregoing legitimate pay increases.

It's too much to hope that there will some day be an end to state imbalances in teacher pay. Some states will always be richer, more competitive than others. But it is the Association's task to shape that competition in ways that increase the total resources flowing to education.

—Nancy R. Needham

Who Jumps and Why

If you look at people who are already teaching, the experts say, some are more likely than others to take new jobs across state lines.

Who Moves

- ► the young
- ► the single
- ► the unvested (in the pension system)
- ► those who live near the state line
- ► those who teach specialized subjects
- ► those who teach subjects in demand.

What Makes Teachers Move

These factors will attract border crossers to a new state—

- ► a pension system that allows buy-ins
- ► a pension system in which buy-ins are affordable
- ► higher maximum salaries
- ► fewer steps to maximum
- ► attractive working conditions

What Holds Teachers Back

These nontransferable factors will keep teachers in the old state—

- ► seniority
- ► sick leave
- ► tenure
- ► pension take-out that's small relative to buy-in requirements in the new state.

This fall the Northeast Common Market Project, which wants to improve teachers' interstate mobility, will report on teacher career moves in the six New England states and New York from 1979 to 1989.

Source: David Title, Harvard University, paper for the Northeast Common Market project, and NEA.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Bruce Berman

New Report Targets Minority Education

Bob Donnan

- *Eliminate ability- and age-grouping.*
- *Extend the school year to minimize summer loss.*
- *Support the learning of at least two languages by each child.*
- *Encourage minority students to take advanced placement exams.*
- *Offer 13th-year programs on college campuses.*

Bob Riha, Jr.

The recommendations listed above are among 58 that appear in the new report *Education That Works: An Action Plan for the Education of Minorities.*

This report from the Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) project of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology concentrates on some groups American education has underserved: African Americans, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

Says NEA President Keith Geiger, "This report is unique in the history of education reform. It deals with reform of the whole educational pipeline, from early childhood education through graduate school—and then goes on to offer an estimated price tag for the plan."

"That cost—$27.3 billion to implement the 1991-95 recommendations—sounds like a lot," notes Geiger, "until you consider how much has to be done."

Education That Works came out of a two-and-a-half-year study funded by the Carnegie Corporation and conducted by a 35-member action council (including former NEA President Mary Hatwood Futrell). To collect information, the council held nine regional meetings around the country and another series of meetings in Cambridge, Mass., and Washington, D.C. Beginning this year, the council will be succeeded by the Quality Education for Minorities Network, which will implement the report's recommendations.

NEA is already considering some of the council's recommendations—the ones that overlap those of the . . .*And Justice for All* program. This NEA program, now three years old, aims to improve the education of the same ethnic minority groups QEM deals with, plus Asians and Pacific Islanders. The $1.2 million effort is being coordinated by NEA's Human and Civil Rights staff.

Nancy Pierce

The reports of . . .*And Justice for All* provide information about the educational problems facing minority groups. Besides these kinds of data, the QEM report gives background information about the history and education of each group.

Today, for its own economic and political survival our country must provide a high-quality education to the so-called "minority groups": they're rapidly becoming the majority. This year, they make up one-fifth of the population, but, by 2020, they'll be one-third.

The QEM report puts the position strongly: if the United States is to continue to compete in the world market, it will have to adjust to being a majority "minority" nation.

—Mary Faber
NEA Human and Civil Rights

For a free summary of *Education that Works*, send a self-addressed, stamped ($1.25), 9½" x 12" envelope to Quality Education for Minorities Project, MIT Room 26-157, Cambridge, MA 02139.

QEM Sets Goals:

- ► Ensure that minority students start school prepared to learn.
- ► Ensure that the academic achievement of minority youth will enable them, upon graduation from high school, to enter the workforce or college fully prepared to be successful.
- ► Significantly increase the participation of minority students in higher education, with a special emphasis on the study of mathematics, science, and engineering.
- ► Strengthen teachers of minority students, and increase their number.
- ► Smooth the school-to-work transition so minority students who don't choose college leave high school prepared to participate productively in the work world and to upgrade their skills and advance their careers.
- ► Provide high quality out-of-school educational experiences and opportunities to supplement the schooling of minority youth and adults.

WASHINGTON WATCH

Politics and Policy

The beginning of a political season is that special time when members of Congress begin rummaging around for an issue that will unite, excite, or incite the voters. Such an issue must meet three conditions:

► It establishes the member of Congress as a leader in the field.

► It sharply contrasts the member of Congress with opponents.

► It only costs about $5 million.

Members of Congress running for reelection are currently trying to carve out pieces of education that meet these conditions. Never mind that education doesn't come in $5 million slices.

It's hard to keep Congress, as a collection of candidates, focused on the big picture. Hundreds of education organizations in Washington, D.C., try to do that and fail. Still, big problems need big solutions.

► The most helpful way to secure enough Ph.D.'s in the hard sciences isn't to set up a narrowly defined $5 million scholarship program, but to address the $9 *billion* in unmet needs for postsecondary student aid.

► To get people who can benefit from student aid, we have to cut the dropout rate. As it happens, effective dropout prevention programs are already on the books: Head Start, Chapter 1 math and reading, bilingual education, and handicapped education programs. But to fill existing needs, they need some $20 billion more.

NEA works hard to keep that message in front of the Congress, with information grounded in the best available research. But what sets NEA apart from other education advocates is the strength of its political action program. That means member participation in NEA-PAC and in organized volunteer efforts on behalf of friends of education. Because on Election Day, NEA doesn't cast a vote. Its 2 million members do.

—Michael Pons
NEA Government Relations

Local Look

MARYLAND

Higher salaries, more planning time, and on-site child-care centers were key issues for Montgomery County Education Association members, and it appears they've won them in their new contract.

The contract, ratified last month, would raise the salaries of Montgomery County's 7,200 teachers by 20 percent over the next three years; beginning teachers' pay would jump from $25,661 to about $31,000.

In addition, every elementary school teacher will get an extra half-hour planning period for a total of five hours per week, and the school system will pay more toward members' graduate course tuition. School officials also agreed to consider opening employee child-care centers in several county schools.

There is one hitch—the contract still must win approval from the county council. Some council members think the raises are too high.

MCEA will fight back "if council members vote to bust this contract," says MCEA President Mark Simon. "We'll actively oppose the re-election of any council member who votes to overturn the contract or to give the school system less money than is needed to fully fund the contract."

IDAHO

Local Associations in Idaho Falls and East Bonneville have joined forces with the local Chamber of Commerce, League of Women Voters, American Association of University Women, and Republican and Democratic women's clubs to form a pro-education coalition.

Cochairing the coalition are a parent and high school English teacher Lexie French, former IFEA president and current chair of the Chamber's education committee. Idaho Education Association immediate past president Peggy Park and IEA Board member Maureen Finnerty serve on the coalition's steering committee.

The eight-month-old coalition is now working to set up a tax-free foundation that would channel money from local businesses and individuals to schools, to convince businesses to limit students' after-school work hours, ånd to establish site-based decision making at one local school.

TEXAS

Radio spots, paid for by contributions from members of the El Paso Teachers Association, were key to defeating a property tax rollback in a record turnout vote in the El Paso school district. The rollback lost by a margin of 2,500 out of a total of 37,000 votes.

"Retirees were behind the initiative," explains EPTA president Lonnie Luna. "So we designed the spots to remind them that it was the public schools that educated their own children, and that now they should think of their grandchildren."

The ads also corrected the incorrect allegation by rollback proponents that senior citizens' taxes would be raised. In fact senior citizens were exempt from the tax increase.

But Luna says, the Association's work is now cut out for it: to serve as budget watchdog and community fence mender.

"We don't want to have to go through this election campaign again next year," Luna says, "so we need to make sure that the community knows what their tax money is going for.

IN GADSDEN COUNTY, FLORIDA

Mark Wallheiser

Gadsden County (Fla.) Classroom Teachers Association Vice President Willie Ruth Williams (right) talks shop outside Shanks High School with colleagues Gladys Rhowe (left) and Leola Francis.

What the Legislators Didn't Hear

After years of lobbying for a school-based health clinic, members of the Gadsden County (Fla.) Classroom Teachers Association reached their goal. Three years ago, a clinic opened at James A. Shanks High School in Quincy.

Since then, the clinic's helped to lower teenage pregnancy and school truancy rates while providing primary and preventive health care services to county students.

Unlike many successful school projects, the clinic did not go unnoticed. Recently, some 30 state legislators made an onsite study of the Gadsden County Health Clinic and praised it to the rafters—and the press.

While GCCTA members were happy the clinic got the attention it deserved, they would have liked visiting legislators—and reporters—to pay attention to a few other things—teachers' neglected working conditions, for one.

For eight months, county teachers had been haggling with the school board. Their salaries, still below the statewide average, are based on an antiquated 26-step salary schedule, which provides only minimal raises for veteran teachers. Morale was flagging.

Finally a settlement providing 6 percent raises was reached. But chief negotiator and GCCTA Vice President Willie Ruth Williams notes that the long-drawn-out process took "a little of the luster" off the retroactive pay hike. And, she adds, this July the process starts all over again.

"If we could have spoken our minds to the visiting legislators," Williams says, "we would have said 'give us binding arbitration so we won't have to fight for months to avoid accepting unilaterally imposed settlements."'

Although state funding will be tight this year, GCCTA bargaining goals will again include reducing the number of steps on the salary scale, increasing wages overall, and improving working conditions.

"It's a perfect time to introduce site-based decision making that involves parents. Who else really knows what the schools are doing?"

MISSOURI

Truman High School American history teacher Doug Allen is Independence-NEA's trash czar, a title he wears proudly.

Watching delegates to last summer's NEA Representative Assembly take some tough environmentalist stands, Allen decided to do "something in my own backyard." INEA's Recycling Project was born.

Now about 400 teachers and their students in 16 area schools voluntarily participate in collecting and hauling about a ton—17 trees' worth—of recyclable paper each month.

Money raised from the sale of the paper is used to fund INEA scholarships, drug- and alcohol-free graduation parties, and this month, a local Earth Day project—Save a Tree, Plant a Tree.

The trash czar title comes with some responsibilities. Once a week, Allen climbs into the dumpster and pulls out all the papers that don't belong—newsprint, colored paper, *Weekly Readers.*

"I don't mind it too much," he says. "I guess it comes with the title. But," he adds with a laugh, "I didn't think my career would end up in the dumpster."

VERMONT

When the Windham Southeast Education Association wanted to do something to make their community feel good about education, they did it in a big way. Four months' planning, 12 coordinators, and 6 dozen teacher presenters put together an education fair to show the community just how exciting their schools are.

Coming out of long, tough successful negotiations for their 1989-91 contract, Association members welcomed the chance to work together on a showcase for their classroom expertise. Community members who turned out for the event apparently liked what they saw: three days later a Brattleboro town meeting passed the education budgets for 1990-91.

State Side

NORTHEAST

Still reeling from public education's $300 million share of their state's $600 million 1989-90 budget cut, Massachusetts teachers have now suffered a second and very personal blow. As of July 1, state and local public employees enrolled in HMO plans will have to pay at least 10 percent of the premiums, currently fully paid by the employer. The move will take some $30 million a year out of the pockets of public employees.

MTA is now aiming for repeal of the new law.

MIDWEST

South Dakota's teachers, currently the lowest paid in the nation (average salaries barely top $20,000) earned an unexpected raise this year.

SDEA members recently helped pass a bill authorizing an additional $16.4 million for school reforms.

Teachers, counselors, and librarians will share $9.7 million of the money earmarked solely for salaries. Each will get an estimated $1,150 raise.

SDEA President Clyde Clauson says, "We don't believe this salary increase will move us out of 51st place, but our governor's goal is to move us to 43rd."

MID-ATLANTIC

The Delaware State Education Association is working hard to give education support personnel the same bargaining rights teachers enjoy.

Under the current bargaining law covering school support employees, the impasse resolution procedure does not permit mediation on issues related to salary and benefits.

A DSEA-backed bill—which has broad legislative support—would grant education support personnel the same bargaining rights and procedures guaranteed other employees under the jurisdiction of the Public School Employment Relations Act.

PACIFIC

For one day last February, some 13,000 teachers in Washington State walked off their jobs—with the blessing of their school boards—to protest low salaries and low education funding in general.

Another 12,000 held after-school rallies and letter-writing sessions.

The demonstrations coincided with a public awareness campaign, which WEA has been running for the past several months.

Since the state legislature took over education funding in 1981, average teacher salaries have dropped from fourth in the nation to 21st. Teachers will get an average 10 percent pay raise over the next two years, but they want 20 percent to compensate for small past increases.

WEST

Association members in Oklahoma and New Mexico are putting pressure on state legislatures that are reluctant to vote new taxes for schools.

As elsewhere in the nation (see p.3), Oklahoma and New Mexico teachers have said they're willing to undertake statewide job actions as the ultimate weapon if their state legislatures cannot meet minimum standards of support for public education.

At press time, three votes in the state Senate stood between Oklahomans and a 5-year legislative package that includes $2 billion in new revenues. In New Mexico, where the legislature ended its regular session without voting a teacher pay increase, the Association was asking for a 7.1 percent rise in education salaries and a special session.

SOUTHEAST

This June Alabamians may set up an education fund designed to last forever. The Penny Trust Fund proposed in a ballot referendum would accept voluntary contributions and disburse 90 percent of the interest for public health. Half of that amount would go to the schools, for substance abuse prevention, immunizations, health education, and nutritional education. The rest of the interest would go to the fund's capital, to remain untouched.

The Alabama Education Association, which worked hard to get the referendum on the ballot, has now set its sights on victory for the necessary constitutional amendment in the June election.

HOW ARE YOU?

Is Your State Population Healthy?

Residents of Utah—the state with the healthiest population—live two and a half years longer than citizens of Delaware—the state with the unhealthiest population—according to a recently released survey by the Northwestern National Life Insurance Company.

The survey ranked states (see left column) from 1 to 50—state 1 having the healthiest population, 50 the unhealthiest, using 16 health measurement criteria grouped into the following six factors:

- *Life span* (1 equals the highest life expectancy at birth)
- *Disease* (1 equals the lowest rate of major illness)
- *Lifestyle* (1 equals the greatest participation in healthy habits and lowest rate of alcohol and cigarette consumption)
- *Access* (1 equals the highest availability of doctors and highest portion of population with health insurance)
- *Lost time* (1 equals the fewest missed school and work days and the fewest acute illnesses)
- *Mortality* (1 equals the lowest total death rates, infant death rates, and premature death rates).

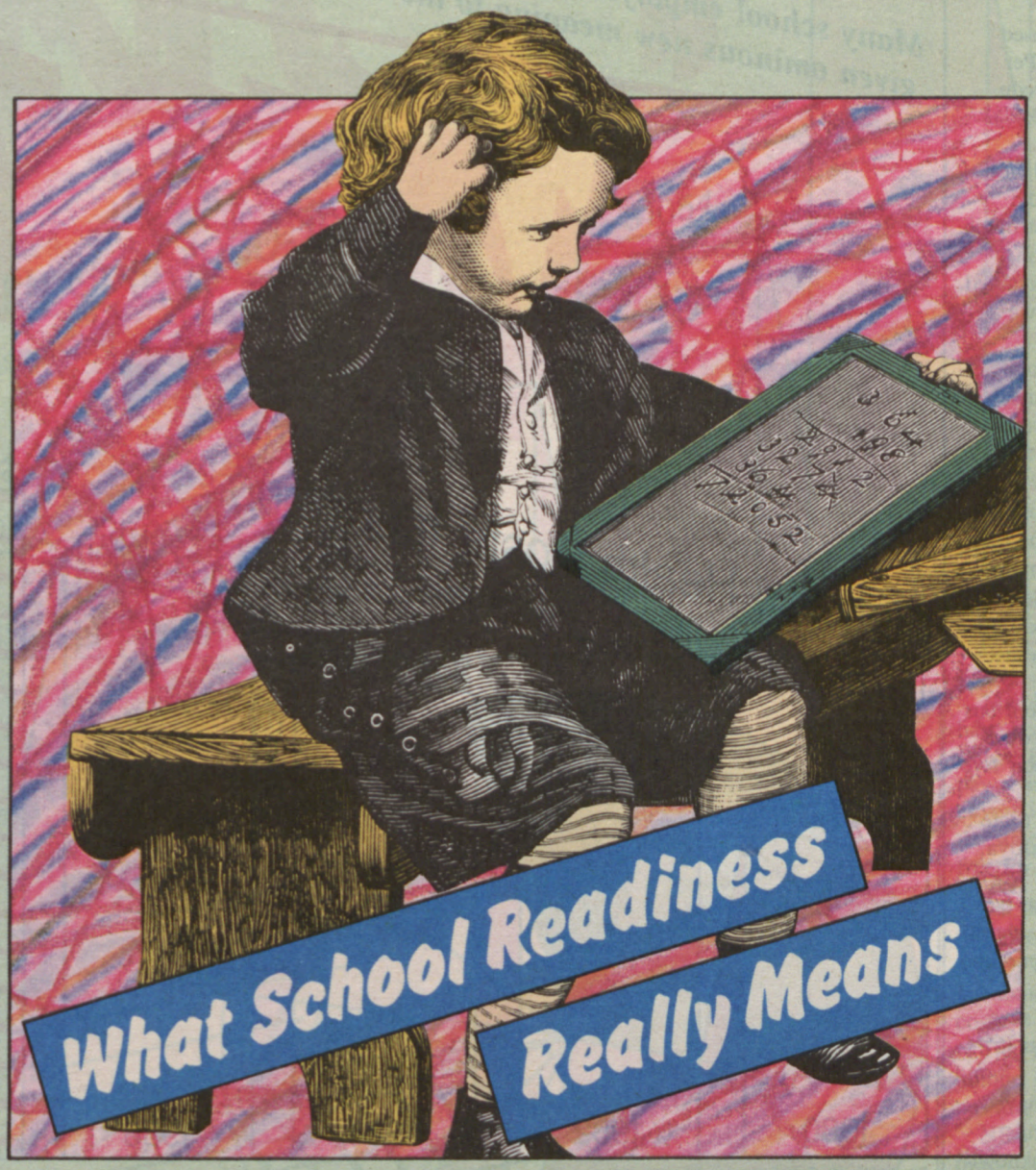
**These states are in a tie.*

Rank	State	Life Span	Disease	Life Style	Access	Lost Time	Mortality
1	Utah	3	1	1	38	10	1
2	North Dakota	5	4	6	10	18	4
3	Idaho	10	2	2	25	10	11
4	Minnesota	2	5	18	3	31	6
5	Hawaii	1	16	35	21	1	1
6	Vermont	17	6	42	3	37	16
7	Nebraska	6	7	3	17	37	22
8	Colorado	9	9	29	20	7	5
9	Wyoming	26	3	26	37	9	10
10	Montana	25	7	18	16	13	18
11	Washington	11	11	22	16	10	13
12	Oregon	14	14	15	5	18	24
13	New Mexico	22	12	17	43	2	8
14	Wisconsin	7	12	31	17	31	14
15	South Dakota	14	10	7	23	27	29
16	Iowa	3	19	3	30	45	14
17	Maine	19	17	25	12	45	23
18	California	19	26	31	8	4	7
19	Massachusetts	13	23	38	1	37	21
20	Alaska	46	21	47	40	3	3
21	Indiana	26	18	18	33	31	31
22	Arizona	21	25	37	28	5	16
23	Oklahoma	31	20	12	42	18	32
24	New Hampshire*	14	15	49	11	37	9
24	Kansas*	7	35	5	21	31	19
26	Texas*	31	26	29	45	5	11
26	Pennsylvania*	34	24	24	12	50	39
28	Connecticut	11	36	38	1	27	20
29	Kentucky	41	22	14	25	37	36
30	New Jersey	22	28	38	19	18	28
31	Missouri	26	31	13	33	45	32
32	Ohio	35	30	26	25	37	30
33	Virginia	36	29	38	31	18	27
34	Arkansas	29	32	7	35	37	44
35	West Virginia	43	34	9	28	45	47
36	Illinois	37	37	31	24	13	36
37	New York	29	42	36	7	13	38
38	Louisiana*	50	33	28	47	13	40
38	Tennessee*	39	41	10	35	37	40
40	Rhode Island	18	43	45	9	45	26
41	North Carolina	42	40	22	43	27	40
42	Alabama	45	39	10	46	31	48
43	Maryland	37	49	44	14	18	34
44	Florida	22	46	48	15	31	45
45	Georgia	46	47	31	48	18	45
46	South Carolina	49	45	18	49	13	49
47	Nevada	44	38	50	32	8	24
48	Michigan	31	50	42	40	18	35
49	Mississippi	48	44	16	50	18	50
50	Delaware	40	48	46	38	27	40

Health

Information about health factors that affect the way students learn.

Philip Nader, M.D., is an expert on the health of school-age children. He is chief of the Division of General Pediatrics, University of California, San Diego, and a member of the American Academy of Pediatrics' School Health Committee.



Q. What is school readiness?
A. School readiness is the level of academic skills a child needs to function at the very beginning of school.

Q. What's the reason for evaluating a child's school readiness?
A. A child who's ready for school is more likely to start out with good experiences there—and the attitudes formed by those experiences can in turn affect later achievement and functioning in society. Those early impressions can also build or erode feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem.

Q. What tests are effective in evaluating school readiness?
A. Standardized readiness tests (which measure academic skills) are useful—if they're coupled with developmental screening tests (such as those used by pediatricians to evaluate things like speech and language development) and with observation by the child's parents, teachers, and family doctor.

Q. So tests alone can't determine whether a child is ready to start school?
A. No. In fact, it's dangerous to use *only* tests. Most haven't been extensively evaluated in terms of their reliability or validity (that is, how well they predict later school performance). Tests can't assess all the factors that may influence how a child will do in school.

Besides, the law guarantees every child the right to enter school by a certain age, which varies from state to state. And although children at that age differ widely in level of development, their differing levels of "readiness" don't signify either accelerated or retarded development.

Q. What factors influence the way children will function in school?
A. Three kinds of factors are important: those connected with the child, with the family, and with the school. Biologic trauma and negative experiences early in a child's life may subtly influence neurologic and cognitive development. Language development is crucial to optimal school functioning. Temperament and attention span also make a difference.

Family expectations and the child's previous experiences play a role, too. And the school's expectations of the child, the rigors and demands of formal learning activities, and teachers' flexibility in allowing for different levels of development in different children all influence early learning.

Q. What can educators do to assess readiness once a child is in school?
A. Most teachers and teacher assistants can identify children who can't pay attention, sit still, or follow instructions and those who have such serious speech and language difficulties that they can't communicate, comprehend, or be understood. If such difficulties persist for more than several weeks after school begins, the teacher should talk to the child's parents and to the school psychologist or counselor. The child's doctor should be consulted.

In contrast, the quiet, passive child may either just be shy or have subtler learning handicaps.

Teachers should make sure all their students have had vision and hearing evaluations upon starting school. You can also ask parents for the results of any school readiness evaluations a child's doctor conducted before school started.

If a child was enrolled in a preschool or nursery school before starting kindergarten, you can inquire how the child did and whether there were any problems. Beyond that, a child's progress is proof of school readiness. Waiting more than six to nine months for the child to "mature" could delay needed help.

Q. Why are we hearing so much these days about school readiness?
A. Recently, educators and others have been increasingly concerned about ensuring that our schools prepare children to compete academically with youngsters in other countries. This has led some schools to require younger children to handle higher-level academic tasks that may be too hard for them. If these children can be identified, and their entry into formal academic learning delayed by placement in other types of classes, they may function better later.

On the other hand, school involves more than academic learning. Socialization with other children is a major part of the school experience, and as such it influences a child's development. So keeping children out of school altogether is unwise.

Q. Will repeating kindergarten help the child who's having trouble adjusting to school?
A. Too many children have repeated kindergarten without receiving the help they really need. No child should repeat kindergarten without first receiving a comprehensive evaluation of cognitive and socioemotional development so that the school can give the right kinds of support.

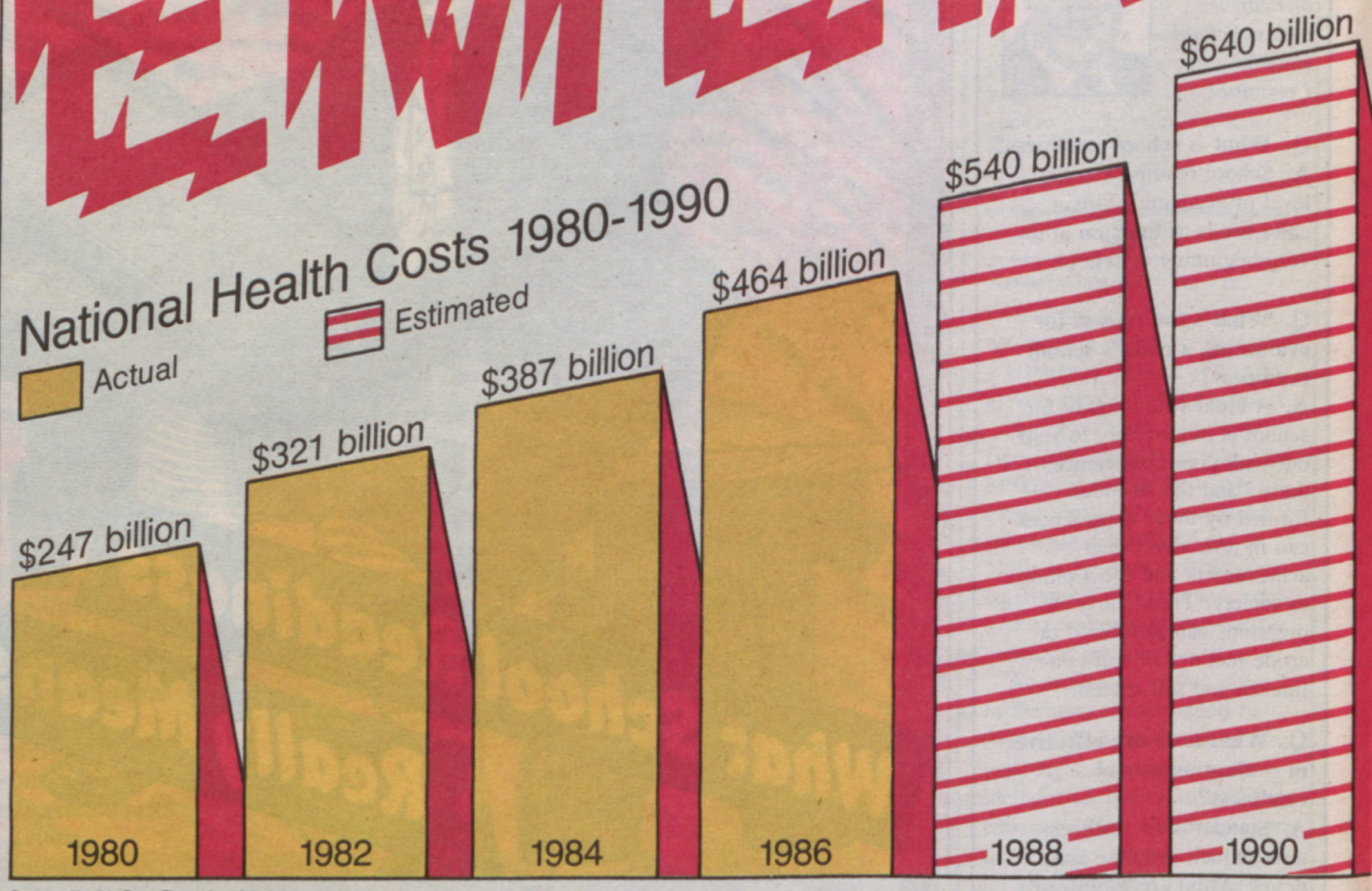
Q. How can curriculum planners create the school setting that's most conducive to learning?
A. Rather than try to force every child into the same educational mold, why not develop a school environment that can accommodate the wide variation in normal development and temperaments that characterizes young children? Doing so may require flexibility in assigning teachers and students, more resources, and more teacher assistants—but the effort is worthwhile.

Q. What should happen after a school readiness evaluation?
A. The best thing that can happen after a comprehensive evaluation of school readiness involving the child's teacher, parents, and doctor is regular communication among all participants concerning the child's progress in school. It's crucial to detect less-than-optimal school progress early. This can make the difference between a child who succeeds and one who fails in school and in life.

HEALTH CARE COSTS...

Many school employees say the spiraling cost of today's health care has given ominous new meaning to the old phrase 'your money or your life.'

EMERG



Source: Health Care Financing Administration

Two years ago, Gaylene Steckelberg, a high school math and science teacher in Ellsworth, Minn., paid about $100 toward the $200-a-month cost of her family health insurance policy. Last year, the total premium went up to $444 a month. Steckelberg couldn't afford it; she dropped out.

This year, the premium increased threefold—to $1,333 a month. "Per month?" asked Steckelberg, incredulous. "Many of us don't even take home that much."

The insurance company's explanation: one person covered under the small-group plan had had a catastrophic accident and a long hospitalization. "They told us we were a self-contained group," Steckelberg says, "and we'd have to cover our own losses."

Not surprisingly, everyone dropped out of the plan. Unable to find another health insurance carrier, Ellsworth Education Association members are temporarily fending for themselves.

Steckelberg now pays $120 a month to cover herself, her husband, and their three kids. But the low-cost premium comes with a high-risk deductible—$2,500. "And we're not set to pay the $2,500," adds Steckelberg. "It's just not there."

Alejandro Garza, a Texas school bus driver, has no health insurance coverage for himself, his wife, and their five children.

Garza, president of the Texas State Teachers Association local in LaJoya, earns $6.75 an hour, 30 hours a week, eight months a year. To purchase family health insurance through the school district, Garza would have to come up with $240 a month.

"I simply can't afford it," he says. "We're barely making a living as it is."

So far, Garza and his family have been lucky. But "if one of my kids needs an operation," he says, acknowledging his biggest fear, "how would I get him into the hospital? What would I do?"

Like death and taxes, America's health care crisis spares no one.

All over the country, education employees face staggering increases in health insurance premiums—up 30 percent this year in Buchanan County, Va.; 59 percent in Wichita County, Kansas; 100 percent in Kankakee, Ill.

"There's been a 10-fold increase in health benefit costs in the last 20 years," says Kathleen McKay, a health benefits expert for NEA's Member Benefits Corporation. "Everybody's being hit."

On average, health insurance premiums are going up 22 percent every year. As a nation, we're paying an estimated $640 billion this year for health care. Health costs are now 12 percent of our gross national product. And the medical inflation rate is running 13.3 percent annually, nearly three times the general inflation rate.

What's behind the health care madness? The causes, numerous and overlapping, include—

Larry Clubb

Bus driver Alejandro Garza says many colleagues used to carry insurance but can no longer afford it.

► *Cost shifting.* Since 1985, doctors and hospitals have been paid a flat rate for most services covered by Medicare. What Medicare doesn't cover gets passed on to insurance companies and then to consumers in the form of higher premiums.

► *Technology.* We're paying the high costs of high-tech diagnostic tests and treatments.

► *Competition.* The commercialization of profit-making medical care has added advertising costs and caused overbuilding of facilities and unnecessary duplication of services.

► *Litigiousness.* Malpractice insurance costs have skyrocketed, and doctors now routinely perform unnecessary tests to cover themselves in case of lawsuits.

► *Cost of caring for the uninsured.* Over 37 million Americans have no health insurance. The bill for the minimal—often emergency—care they receive is indirectly passed on to those who can pay.

► *Higher utilization.* We're getting more medical attention. We see more doctors more frequently; have more preventive checks; and, as an aging society, have more medical needs.

► *Greed.* "Doctors and providers want to maintain their income levels and profit margins," says McKay, politely.

All this leaves people desperately seeking solutions.

Some, like Alejandro Garza and many of his colleagues, aren't finding them. Others are making bitter choices—postponing retirement until Medicare kicks in, trading raises for health benefits, accepting decreases in coverage and increases in individual costs, even striking to protect existing benefits.

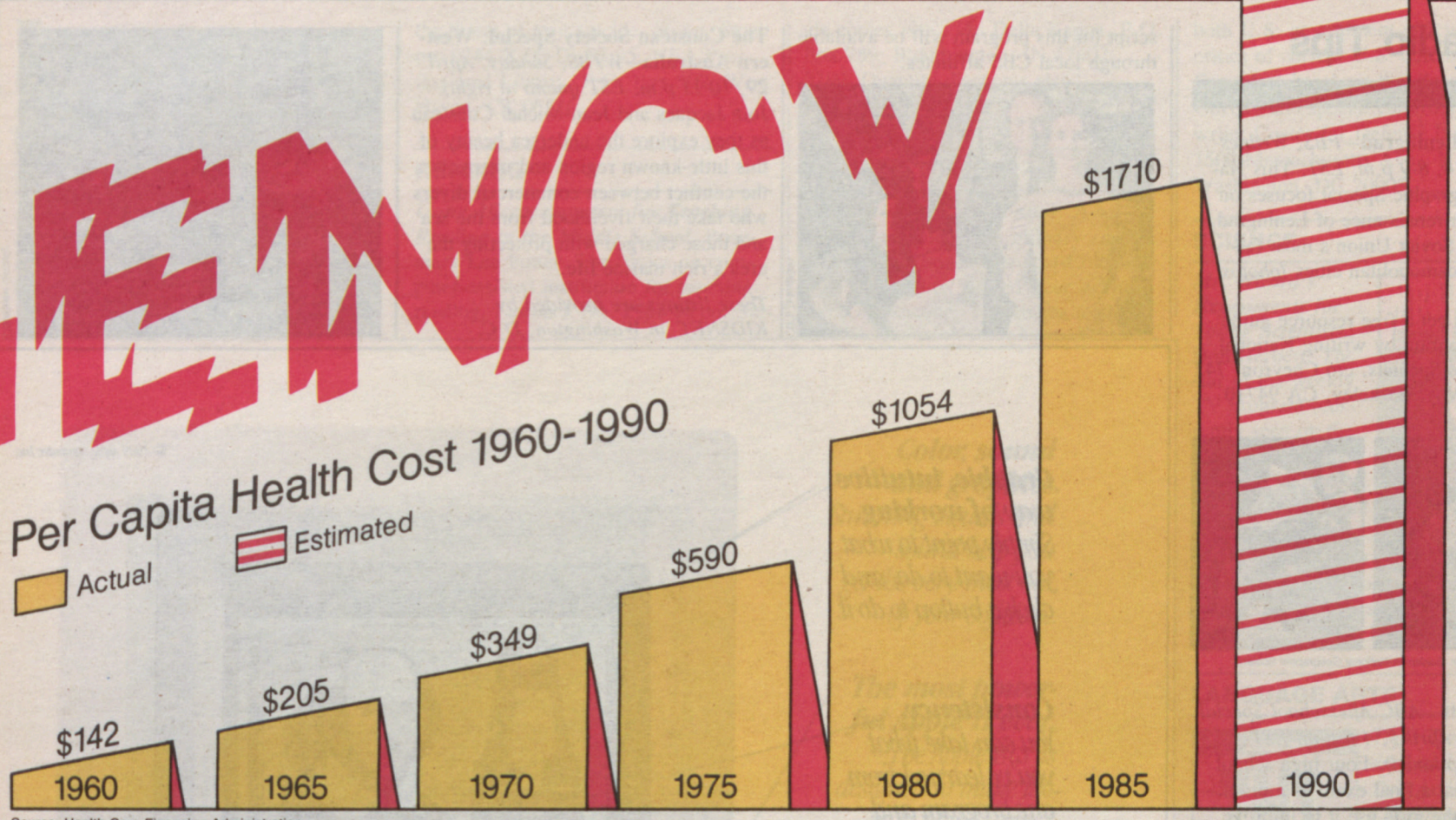
Some local Associations are looking to shared decision making for answers. In Illinois, teachers, support staff, and administrators in Iroquois County, south of Chicago, work together on an advisory health insurance committee. Last spring, their carrier offered two proposals—neither acceptable.

"So we went to the insurance representative and said, this is what we can spend," recalls Darrell Wright, a vocational automotive instructor and member of the committee. "We asked him if he could fit that in his policy without reducing coverage. He made a few phone calls, came back, and said he could. We actually bargained with them and came out ahead."

In central California, employees and employers banded together in 1984 to form the Central Valley Trust, a cooperative labor-management venture

...A NATIONAL CRISIS

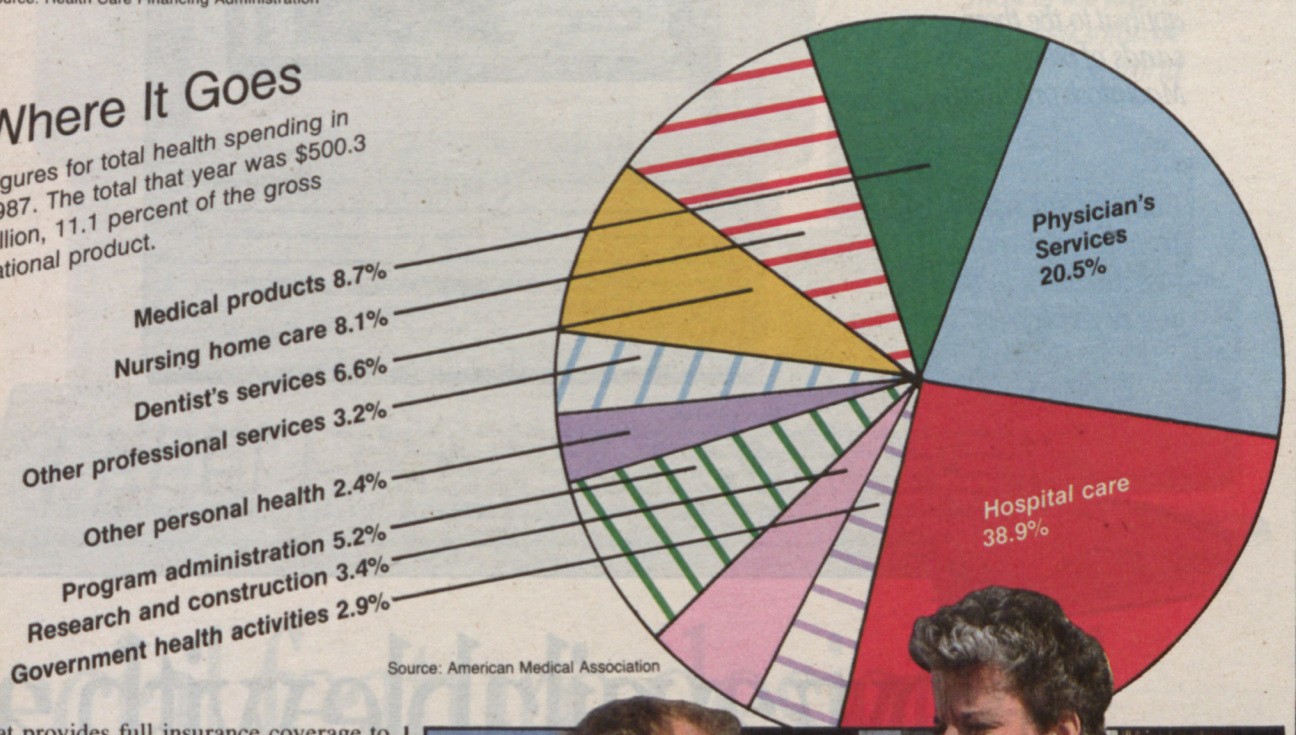
...GENCY



Source: Health Care Financing Administration

Where It Goes

Figures for total health spending in 1987. The total that year was $500.3 billion, 11.1 percent of the gross national product.



Source: American Medical Association

that provides full insurance coverage to 8,000 school employees in 74 primarily rural school districts.

The trust is managed by a team of eight—four superintendents and four representatives of teachers and support staff. Each group of four has one vote; it takes both votes to do anything.

"With a larger pool, we get lower rates," says Susan McClure, special education teacher and president of the Madera Unified Teachers Association. "And with joint management, we feel that we have some input and control."

At the state level, Associations in Texas, Missouri, and elsewhere are working hard to include education employees in statewide public employee insurance plans. These plans help lower costs by spreading out the risk among larger numbers of people. Hawaii, Alaska, Ohio, Kentucky, and Alabama are among the states that already include educators in state plans.

Shawn Elsing

"We're playing Las Vegas odds" with our family's health care, says Minnesota teacher Gaylene Steckelberg, pictured with husband Dennis.

Members of NEA-Retired in Oregon have been successful in getting the state Public Employee Retirement System to pay retirees' supplemental insurance; it covers what Medicare won't. In Texas, the state provides catastrophic coverage free for all retired public employees.

All this leaves the country with a patchwork of stopgap measures—necessary, but ineffective in stopping the phenomenal increases in health care costs.

That's why NEA and many other unions, associations, and businesses are pushing for national solutions.

NEA's Representative Assembly has proposed enactment of a universal health care plan, and many in Congress have begun to understand that the nature of our health care delivery system—which revolves around inefficient and inflationary third-party reimbursement—must be changed.

NEA supports legislation sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) requiring all employers to provide employees and their families with adequate health care coverage.

In addition, NEA is working for the restoration of catastrophic illness benefits and the enactment of long-term care coverage, both financed by fair and progressive taxes.

"We're lucky we're in a profession that has benefits," says Fresno's Susan McClure. "But we see kids whose families have no health insurance, who don't go to the doctor when they need to, who don't get any dental attention. As educators, we know it's not just a problem for us—it's a problem for the whole country."

—Stefanie Weiss

Future issues of NEA Today *will provide more information on proposed national solutions to the health care crisis.*

RESOURCES

TV/Radio Tips

Voices of Leningrad—*PBS, Wednesday, April 4, 8-9 p.m. EST.* This National Geographic Special focuses on the modern renaissance of Leningrad, one of the Soviet Union's most fascinating, cosmopolitan cities *(photos below).*

You can get a free resource guide for this program by writing National Geographic Specials, c/o Chevron, 742 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94710.

Lynn Goldsmith/National Geographic Society

The Cheats—*ABC Afterschool Special, Thursday, April 5, 4-5 p.m. EST (closed-captioned).* Four high school seniors steal a final exam as a prank—but when the girls use it to improve their own scores, they suddenly find that they're unprepared for the consequences.

Maggie's Secret—*CBS Schoolbreak Special, Tuesday, April 10, 4-5 p.m. EST (closed-captioned).* A young girl confronts her parents' alcoholism and realizes she can't just allow their drinking problems to continue without seeking a way to help them.

Profit the Earth—*PBS, Monday, April 16, 8-9 p.m. EST (closed-captioned).* The cornerstone of "Operation Earth" (public television's Year of the Environment outreach campaign) is this one-hour documentary. It presents case studies of creative, practical, and sometimes highly controversial solutions to the world's environmental problems.

Where Have All the Dolphins Gone?—*The Discovery Channel, Sunday, April 22, 9-10 p.m. EST.* Narrated by George C. Scott, this program takes an in-depth look at the tuna industry's slaughter of dolphins.

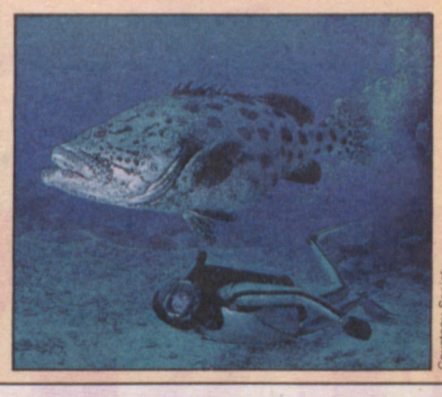
Malcolm Takes a Shot—*CBS Schoolbreak Special, Tuesday, April 24, 4-5 p.m. EST (closed-captioned).* When a basketball player is diagnosed as having epilepsy, he discovers there's more to life than being a sports hero. (Rescheduled from March because of the tragic death of college basketball star Hank Gathers.)

Caroline?—*CBS Hallmark Hall of Fame, Sunday, April 29, 9-11 p.m. EST (photo above, right).* A woman presumed dead for 15 years reappears at the right time to collect a large inheritance, in this dramatization of E. L. Konigsburg's novel *Father's Arcane Daughter.* A CBS Reading Program script for this program will be available through local CBS affiliates.

CBS Television

The Cousteau Society Special: Western Australia—*WTBS, Sunday, April 29, 10-11 p.m. EST (photo at right).* Join Jacques and Jean-Michel Cousteau as they explore the undersea beauty of this little-known region and uncover the conflict between commercial divers who take their livelihood from the sea and those charged with protecting the area's rich marine life.

These listings are provided by KIDSNET in Washington, D.C.



Cousteau Society

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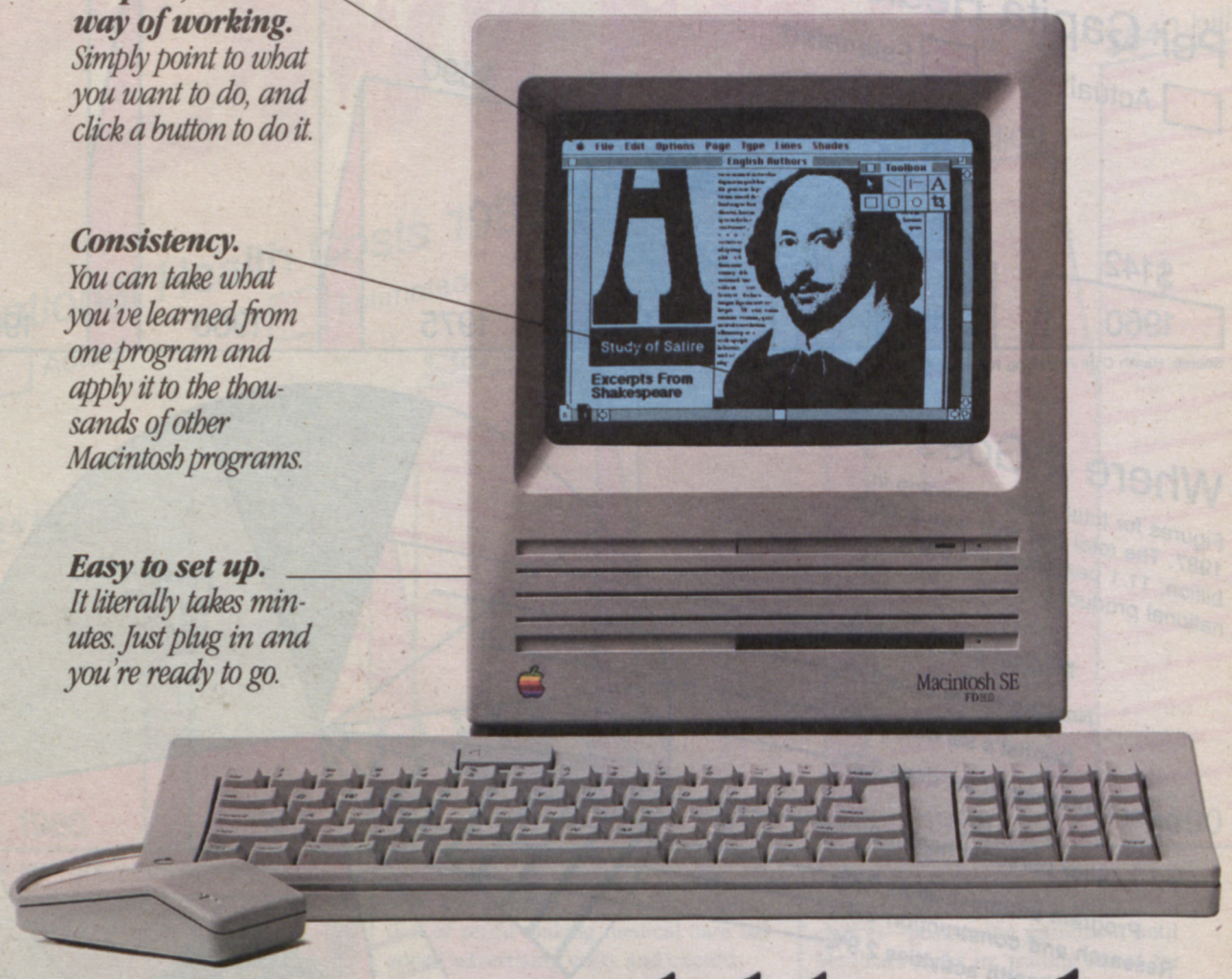

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RESOURCES

Free or Inexpensive

STUDENT HEALTH

Student Suicide: A Guide for Intervention. John A. Vidal. Presents a plan for helping school and community become "response-ready" when dealing with the threat of teen suicide. 56 pp. Stock no. 0244-X-00-D. $7.95, NEA Professional Library, P.O. Box 509, West Haven, CT 06516.

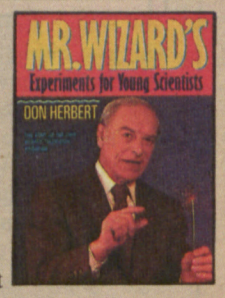
READING

Using Microcomputers for Teaching Reading in the Middle School. Rosemary Lee Potter. The basics on computer-assisted instruction for teaching reading. Fastback No. 296. 44 pp. Single copies, 90¢. Phi Delta Kappa, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402-0789. Quantity discounts also available.

SOCIAL STUDIES

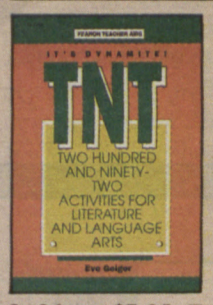
America's Defense Monitor. A series of half-hour videos on military and international issues in a post-Cold War world, hosted by retired Rear Admiral Gene La Rocque. The videos feature both U.S. government officials and top critics of current U.S. defense policies. For a free brochure that describes the videos—and special classroom rates—write: Center for Defense Information, 1500 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20005.

SCIENCE



Mr. Wizard's Experiments for Young Scientists. Don Herbert. The star of the weekly TV program (currently seen on the Nickelodeon cable network) describes 13 experiments that kids can do at home with easily accessible equipment. Grade 5 and up. 187 pp. $7.95. From booksellers or by phone with credit card from Doubleday, 800-223-6834, x479.

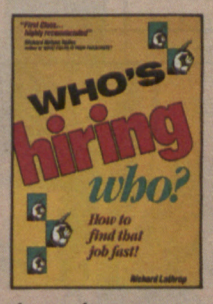
LANGUAGE ARTS



TNT: Two Hundred and Ninety-Two Activities for Literature and Language Arts. Eve Geiger. Describes activities to accompany all sorts of readings for students through grade 8. 96 pp. $7.95. Fearon Teacher Aids, 500 Harbor Blvd., Belmont, CA 94002.

COUNSELING

Teach Them To Be Happy. Robert A. Sullo. A school psychologist suggests ways to teach kids to act according to the principles of William Glasser, M.D.—in a nutshell, to be assertive without being aggressive. New View Publications, P.O. Box 3021, Chapel Hill, NC 27515-3021.



Who's Hiring Who? How To Find That Job Fast! Richard Lathrop. Updated for the '90s, this how-to classic shows jobseekers at any level or stage how to present themselves to potential employers. 12th ed. 266 pp. $9.95 plus $1.50 p&h. From booksellers or by mail from Ten Speed Press, P.O. Box 7123, Berkeley, CA 94707.

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People

Fred Floan's 'Flamingo'

This is a 1961 "flamingo"-colored Studebaker convertible. And this is unassuming **Fred Floan**, its owner.

A sixth grade teacher in Detroit Lakes, Minn., Floan owns 11 Studebakers, but the flamingo is the one he drives in parades.

"My second car when I was in high school was a 1947 Studebaker Commander convertible, and I still have it," Floan says.

Floan's oldest car is a 1925 Studebaker coupe, his newest a 1963 convertible made very close to the time the Studebaker company went belly up.

How can a 19-year teaching veteran afford a car-collecting habit? "I don't usually pay more than $500 for them," Floan explains. Some he uses for parts, others he painstakingly restores himself.

Studebakers aren't Floan's only obsessions. He's collected butterflies, stamps, coins, old cameras, animal skulls, beer cans, souvenirs, and 15,000 slides.

"I guess," he says matter-of-factly, "I'm one of those people who can't throw anything away."

Lin Smithwick

Rescue Ready

When **Georgiana Bratten** decided to become a bus aide for the Cape Henlopen (Del.) School District last year, she thought knowledge of CPR might come in handy, so she went out and took a course.

Today, a five-year-old student is alive and Bratten's a local hero, thanks to her initiative—and quick action.

The girl suffered a seizure on Bratten's bus last November. She'd already begun to turn blue when Bratten started giving her CPR. Emergency room doctors said the child would have died without Bratten's help.

The Cape Henlopen Support Staff Association is now urging the district to provide CPR training for all drivers and bus aides—and to tell them about any medical problems their passengers have.

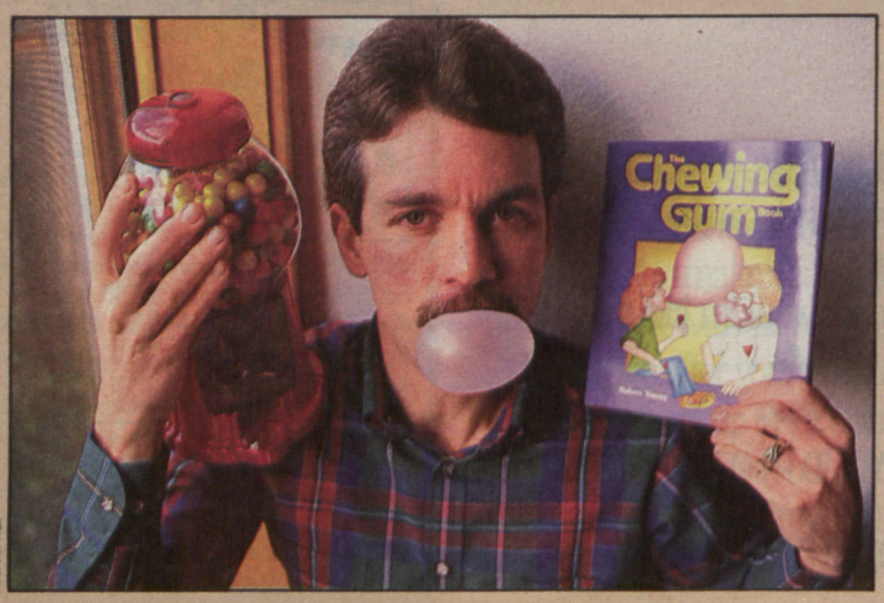
"It's scary. We don't know anything about these children," says Bratten. "With a little more information, we'd know what to expect. CPR training is the first step."

Sean Rojas

Funny Lady

With her tiara, furs, and pink beaded gown, Rhodena Culsmucker is the zany alter-ego of Caddo (La.) Parish Middle School teacher **Debbie Pace.** Over the past six years she's kept audiences in stitches as a stand-up comic for club meetings and emcee for

A Sticky Tale...



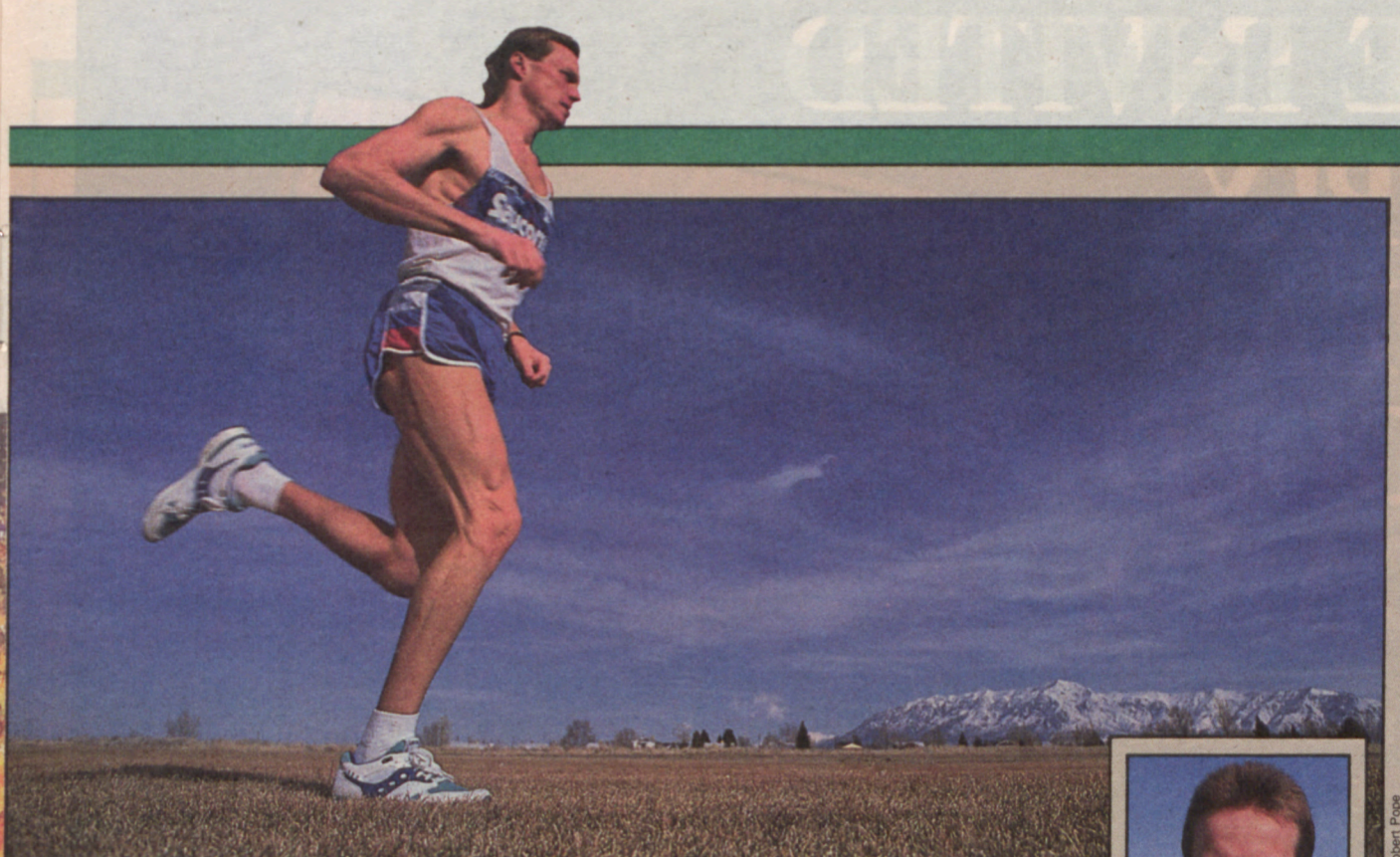
DeeAnn Hall

Chewing gum, the bane of many teachers, is the subject of a children's book by Oregon member **Robert Young.**

The Eugene fourth grade teacher's *Chewing Gum Book*—published by Dillon Press—tells all: how a murder was solved by analyzing tooth marks and saliva found on gum at the scene, how lives were saved when the crew of a dirigible plugged a leak with gum, how gum sculptures cast in gold were exhibited at an art museum, and more.

Young himself chews gum, and he lets his students chew—provided it's not distracting. "Gum helps calm the nerves," he says. "In fact, the very act of chewing is psychologically soothing. Gum is good for sore throats, too."

Young says the average American chews 300 pieces of gum a year. If all those pieces were joined together, he adds, the gum would be 3.5 million miles long—enough to stretch to the moon and back seven times.



Robert Pope

Marathon Man

At 31, **Paul Pilkington** figures he's just coming into his prime as a distance runner.

This year, the middle school English and social studies teacher from Ogden, Utah, won his first marathon, the Houston Tenneco. His victory was worth $29,000—$25,000 for finishing first, $4,000 for being first after 20 miles.

"I pick my contests for the chance to improve my time, but also by the amount of the purse," Pilkington explains. "Otherwise I'd need three extra jobs to support my family." The Pilkingtons have three children.

Pilkington will run in the London marathon this month and maybe in Moscow in August. But his eye is on the prize: the 1992 Barcelona Olympics.

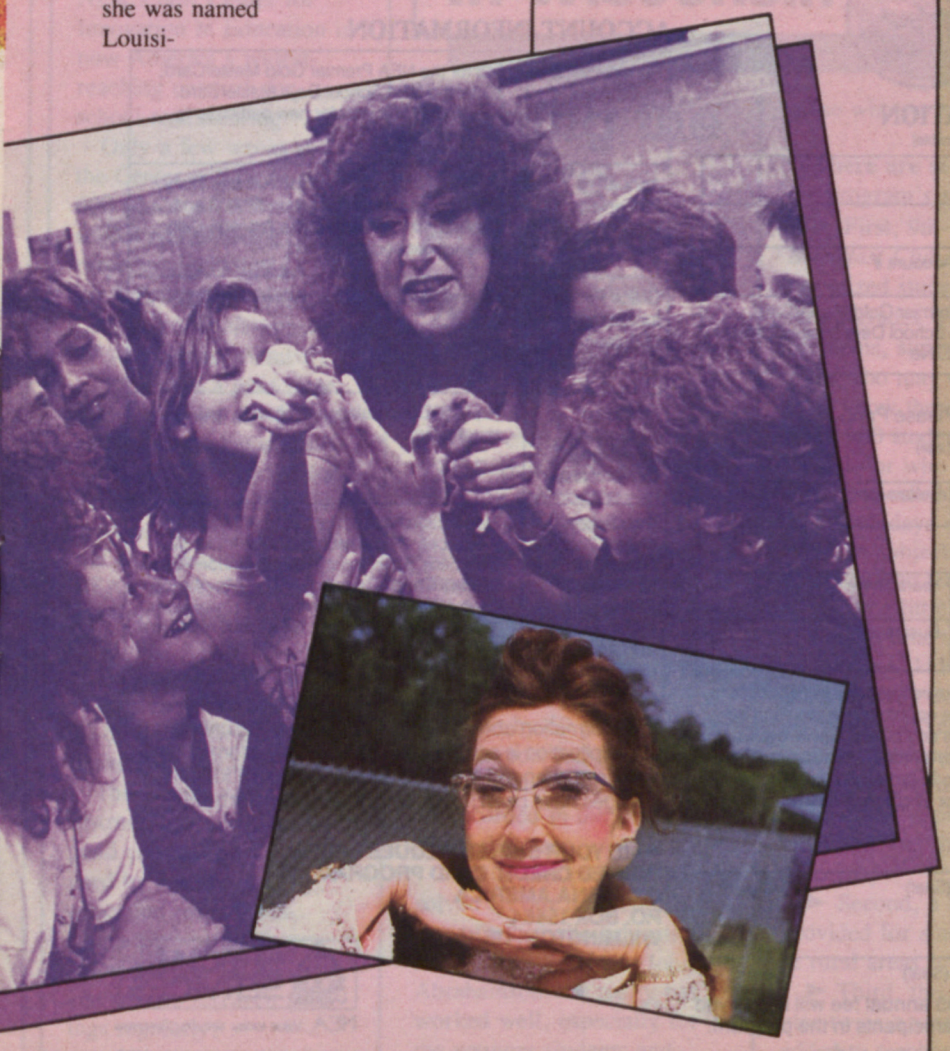
Pilkington also has a coaching business: helping a group ranging from kids to senior citizens reach their running goals. "Adults who run are good role models for kids," he says. "They're dedicated and they work hard."

pageants and events.

The irreverent, gum-chomping Southern belle takes the education establishment by storm, mocking budget cuts, the state's teacher evaluation program, and what she describes as "inservice in hell." Asked by her audience whether the greatest threat to education is ignorance or apathy, she says blithely, "I don't know, and I don't care."

Pace has channeled her comic talents so effectively into the classroom that she was named Louisiana's 1990 Teacher of the Year. She believes teachers can be most effective when they adapt their pedagogy to suit their personalities. "Teaching is not hard work when you align your personal philosophy and your personal style with pedagogic skills that you use in your classroom," maintains Pace.

Pace created Rhodena, she says, "because I've always been a ham."



Peter Glass

Connecticut Lifesavers

It's 20 years since history teacher **John Watts** and several of his colleagues started a student rescue squad in Ellington, Conn.—and today high school students and faculty still staff the ambulances during the day for the Hartford suburb. The teachers organized the squad when the town couldn't muster enough adult volunteers to run the service when many residents were at work.

"Since the beginning, the students have handled suicides, auto accidents, deaths, drug overdoses, childbirth," Watts notes. "Their training is so thorough they can handle whatever comes along."

State-certified instructors give the students a 180-hour Emergency Medical Technician course before the teenagers can go out with the ambulance. Some students begin by securing certification as Medical Response Technicians.

Watts and three other teachers drive the ambulance. Whoever has a prep period when the pager sounds will take the wheel. Students on duty at the time simply get up, walk out of class, and report to the ambulance building nearby. A call comes in about once a day.

When events in the ambulance are very serious, youngsters sometimes want to talk to someone about the call or how they handled it.

"They'll come to us and say, 'that was a tough call,'" says Watts. "One of the other drivers, Buzz Derusha, is a counselor, and they can talk their feelings out with him.

"But if anybody says teenagers are too young to handle tragedies like this, our experiences show that's not the case. In fact, I've had students from the rescue squad go on to become doctors, nurses, lab technicians, and an inhalation therapist."

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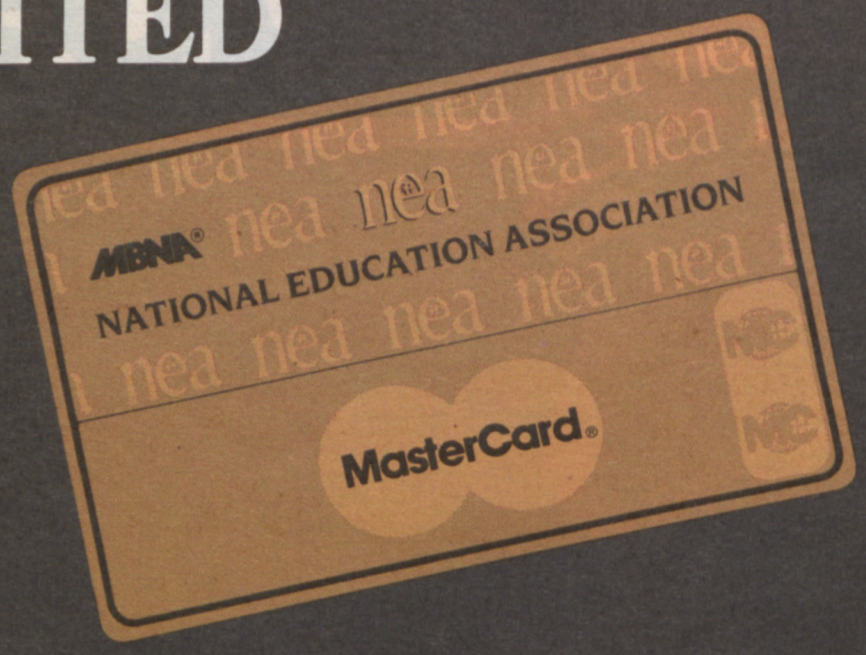

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4/90

Innovation

How NEA members are changing the way schools work.

In Alabama

Peer Tutoring Pays

Abby (not her real name) is 15 and in eighth grade. She's a foster child...and recently she became a mother. Her teachers feared she wouldn't make it to graduation.

But the Montgomery County, Ala., school system's peer tutorial counselor program recently threw Abby an educational lifeline. Now Abby's involved in education—as a student and as one of six teenage tutors in "Project Bootstrap."

Each tutor works with three students in grades K-3 at one of two Montgomery County schools, Floyd and Bellingrath. The schools, both K-9, were chosen because they provide tutors with the opportunity to work with youngsters and attend classes at the same school.

"The program is designed to give the older kids some responsibility—a little boost that will make them feel important," says Kathy Norris, president of the Montgomery County Education Association. They're also rewarded with a paycheck. Tutors—trained by teachers for the job—earn $2.50 an hour.

The younger kids get a boost, too. For two afternoons a week, they're read to, taught "hands-on" lessons, and given the extra attention they need.

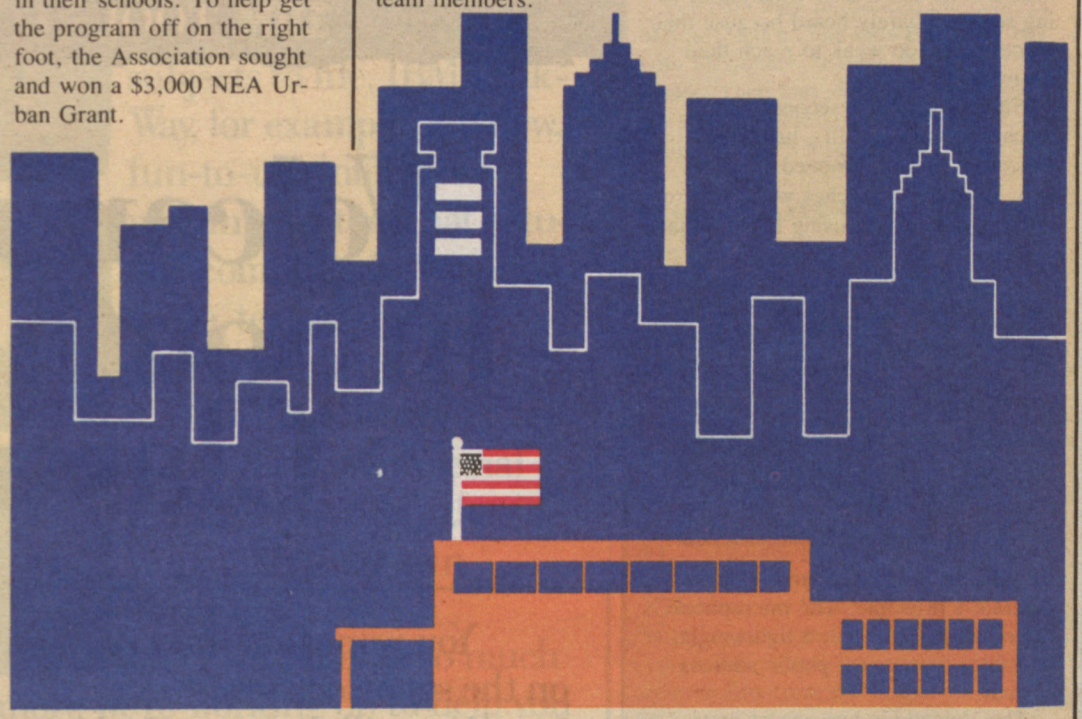
Montgomery's program is modeled after one in San Antonio, Texas, where a similar effort—the Valued Youth Program—was portrayed in the ABC news feature "Growing Up Down and Out."

When Montgomery County Education Association members saw the program last September, they figured it might work with at-risk kids in their schools. To help get the program off on the right foot, the Association sought and won a $3,000 NEA Urban Grant.

Although the program's just a few months old, tutors in Project Bootstrap are already bonding with the younger students and their families. They even have special stationery to send personal notes to their team members.

"We're off to a great start," says Norris. "The young children look up to the tutors and the tutors feel needed and useful. Everyone's a winner."

—Vicky Lytle



NEA Establishes Innovation Network

NEA's new Center for Innovation in Education is now America's widest-reaching network for school restructuring.

Only a few weeks old, the Center will build on the 600 education reform and school restructuring projects—including Learning Labs and Mastery in Learning schools—created by Association members.

"We have a gold mine of information about what works—and what doesn't work—in efforts to create school environments that nurture effective teaching and enthusiastic learning," NEA President Keith Geiger told reporters. "Through our new Center, we'll be better able to share this information with all those working to improve America's schools."

The Center will finance restructuring projects, expand computer networks used by teachers and education researchers, sponsor a yearly symposium, publish a newsletter, and release research findings regularly.

In Wisconsin

Cutting the Failure Rate

At Parkview Junior/Senior High in Orfordville, Wisc., teachers put a new spin on detention.

They changed the name to "9th Period," set the goal of reducing the number of failing grades, and expanded the concept to include instruction and remediation for all who want it—not just punishment for those who need it.

The result: the failure rate at the 547-student school has been cut by 60 percent—from 433 Fs recorded in the first quarter two years ago to 175 Fs recorded in the first quarter of this year.

"While this program hasn't solved all our problems," notes Orfordville Education Association President John Abrahamson, "it really has worked well, especially for the younger students and those who want help."

There are several keys to the program's success.

► First, 9th Period isn't a *Breakfast Club* gathering of ostracized students from different grades with different problems, supervised by an adult who may or may not even know them. Instead, the 60 to 100 students who are assigned—or who volunteer—to stay after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays work on their problem subjects with the teachers who teach them.

"With a little bit of concern and some time to sit down one-on-one, kids are able to get caught up and feel good about themselves," says Nancy Nettesheim, an 8th and 9th grade English and reading teacher. "The program gives kids who want help a way to succeed."

► Second, a late bus was provided for students who live in rural areas.

► Third, the extra 40 minutes twice a week isn't just added to teachers' already full schedules. Parkview's principal freed up teachers for the extra period by hiring assistants for study hall and noon-hour supervision duties formerly handled by teachers.

► Fourth, when 9th Period is a disciplinary step, parents are brought into the process. The first time students don't hand in homework on time, they're assigned to 9th Period and must fill out parent notification forms.

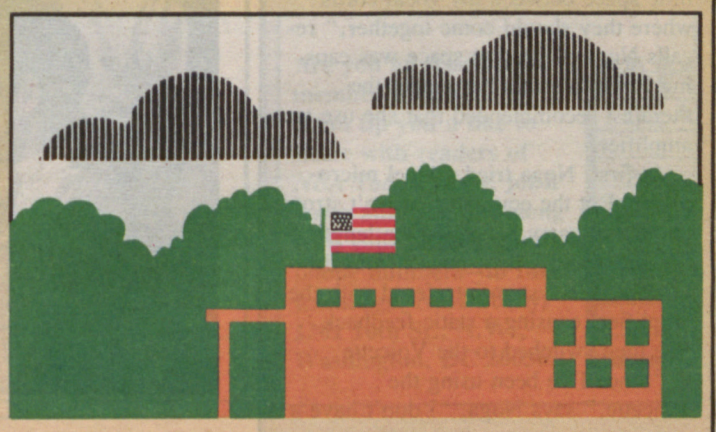
If there is a second incident, the teacher calls the parents and the student is again assigned to 9th Period. Third and fourth incidents result in in-school suspensions, parent meetings, and mandated 9th Period attendance four days a week. No one—and that includes athletes—is excused from attending. No-shows may be suspended.

"Ninety-five percent of the kids never get past the second incident," says Nettesheim. 'For the 5 percent who do, it's been an ongoing, chronic problem."

► Fifth, in addition to 9th Period, Parkview added a peer tutoring program. Seventy-five students participate in the totally voluntary program, receiving credit and grades for their efforts.

Here, too, success can be counted. Students being tutored had 42 percent fewer Fs in the first quarter of this year than of last year; 70 percent of the participants improved their overall grade point averages.

—Stefanie Weiss



TECH TALK

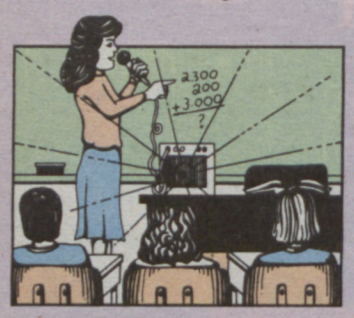
Turning Up the Volume

By John Williams

Technology breakthroughs that benefit disabled students are fairly well known. But less has been written about technology that helps teachers overcome their own disabilities so they can reach their students (and in the process become positive role models).

For years, classroom teachers Dorothy Noga and Barbara Nitchschneider suffered the same daily frustration: being seen but barely heard because their voices were too weak to reach their students.

Nitchschneider, a second grade teacher in Palatine, Ill., had her cancerous larynx removed 15 years ago. Today, she teaches with a microphone in one hand, using her free hand



to write on the blackboard or demonstrate a principle. The microphone is linked to the Voicette, a lightweight, portable, economical public address system.

The Voicette is just one of many portable amplifying systems for people with weak voices, esophageal speakers, or people with partially paralyzed vocal cords.

"I wouldn't be teaching today," says Nitchschneider, "if I didn't have this product. My voice isn't strong enough to be heard by anyone who's more than two or three feet away from me. This product saved my career."

Dorothy Noga, a fourth grade teacher at Grant Elementary School in Willoughby, Ohio, also uses the Voicette. She either puts it on a podium at the front of her classroom or straps it to her shoulder as she walks up and down the aisles during tests.

"The Voicette has been an excellent speaking tool for me," says Noga. "It saves my voice, and it makes teaching less physically taxing for me."

Noga began using an amplifier two years ago on the advice of a speech therapist. "The therapist discovered a little space between my vocal cords where they should come together," recalls Noga. Since the space was causing Noga to strain her voice, the therapist recommended that she use an amplifier.

At first, Noga tried a lapel microphone. But the equipment wasn't strong enough to carry her voice the length of the classroom. Also, noises from the loudspeaker system interfered with the amplifier, causing a static feedback. She then switched to the Voicette.

"Since I've been using the Voicette," says Noga, "I don't have a raspy feeling in my throat, and my voice doesn't feel tired after a long day of teaching."

Voice amplifiers aren't the only technological aid helping today's classroom teachers. A legally blind Denver teacher who has multiple sclerosis uses a sonar device attached to her wheelchair to guide her through hallways. Speech-impaired teachers can type their words into a computer and have a speech augmentation device "speak" for them. And many deaf educators use closed-captioning devices in their classrooms.

"In our own way, we're educating students and other teachers on the benefits of these tools for anyone who needs them," says Nitchschneider. "I'm glad we're contributing to this education. It makes it easier for our students to understand that just because a person is handicapped doesn't mean that person can't do the job."

John Williams is editor and publisher of Special and Individual Technology (SAINT), *a monthly consumer newsletter on high technology for the elderly and disabled.*

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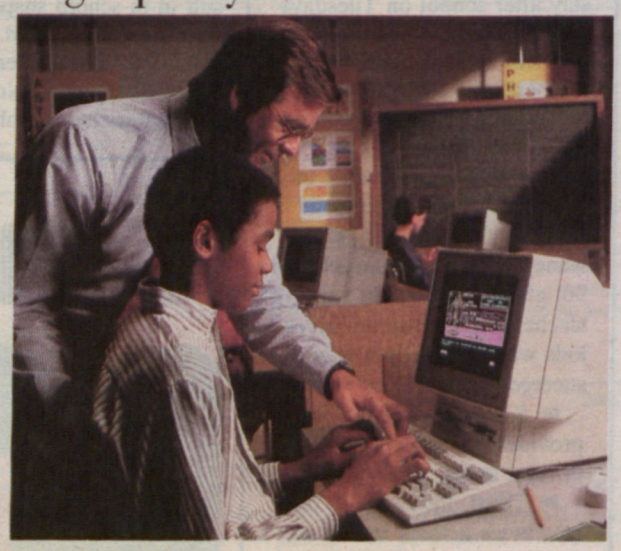

IDEA EXCHANGE

Cross-Country Hiking —Caldonia Style

Students attending Caldonia (Minn.) Public School can walk across the whole country in no time. That's because they do their hiking on an 80′ x 90′ five-color map of the United States that's painted on the school playground.

Teachers Lee Grippen, Carolyn Medin, and Kathy Danaher designed

and painted the map last summer—with the help of a commercial artist.

"It's a great teaching tool," says Grippen. "The kids can stand on the states and see where they're located in relation to one another. Iowa alone is nine feet across."

. . .999,999. . . 1,000,000!

When Mae Peterson's fourth grade advanced math students at Orchard Road School in Skillman, N.J., decided to collect a million of something to see what the number meant, Peterson used the opportunity to bolster math skills.

The kids decided to collect a million magazine pages—counting two sides as a page—storing them in paper bags (magazines and bags are plentiful and recyclable). They practiced addition by keeping a running record of the number of pages. When they divided the totals by two to get a true count of the number of sheets of paper, they got a lesson in division.

As their collection grew, the students determined that one paper bag held 5,000 sheets. By dividing again, they found they had to collect 200 bags of magazines to demonstrate a million.

Peterson then introduced the concept of equivalence: The kids filled one bag with magazines, leaving the other 199 empty. Then they displayed the bags in the school cafeteria so others could imagine what a million would look like.

'You're Great!'

When we feel good about ourselves, all things are possible. So San Diego teacher Dolli Asaro works hard to raise the self-esteem of all her seventh through ninth graders at Montgomery Junior High.

Self-confidence is often the subject of the day, whether the class is studying literary characters or personalities in the news. The students soon realize that everything they say to someone else affects that person's mental health.

To bring the lesson even closer to home, Asero's students take turns—one every week or two—receiving written compliments from the rest of the class. By the end of the year, everyone's self-esteem is at an all-time high.

Who's That Reader?

Lillian Kachadourian wanted to stress the importance of reading to her second graders at Trombly School in Grosse Point, Mich.—and at the same time to celebrate this 1989-90 "Year of the Reader." So she started inviting people from the community into her classroom to read to her students.

Leading off the program was Michigan Superintendent of Public Instruction Donald Bemis, who read *Budgie at Bendick's Point* by the Duchess of York. Other guests have been Pittsburgh pro baseball player Walt Terrell, Grosse Pointe mayor Palmer Heenan, a zoo director, local TV personalities, and community leaders.

"What we're really trying to get across," says Kachadourian, "is that no matter what your occupation, you need to know how to read."

Are you an Association member with a classroom tip you'd like to share with readers of *NEA Today?* If so, jot it down and send it—along with your address and phone numbers—to Idea Exchange, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

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BOOK BEAT

The Reading Crisis: Why Poor Children Fall Behind

By Jeanne S. Chall, Vicki A. Jacobs, and Luke E. Baldwin

Harvard. 183 pp. $25.

Chall

Jacobs

Baldwin

Laura Wolfe

The Fourth Grade Slump Explained

For some kids, using more basals in the early years and more direct instruction in the middle years may be best.

Jeanne Chall, reading guru and professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has long warned about the sudden deceleration in reading achievement that occurs among low-income children at about fourth grade—and puts those children's school learning at risk from then on out.

Now, in their new book, *The Reading Crisis: Why Poor Children Fall Behind*, Chall and colleagues Vicki Jacobs (also of Harvard) and Luke Baldwin (of Lesley College) figure out what happens to these kids and suggest what schools can do about it.

The book reports research on reading instruction and achievement of 30 low-income children in grades 2, 4, and 6 over two years. It also gives follow-up test scores for the same children in grades 7, 9, and 11.

First, what happens to these kids? As expected, the Chall team documents slippage in reading achievement, starting in fourth grade and getting worse in each successive grade. Also: "The earlier low-income children start to slip, the faster they fall."

But the first measure to drop is not comprehension or higher-order reading skills, but vocabulary. Then word recognition and spelling.

So the team concludes that when kids develop a reading problem in grades 4-7, it isn't *yet* a comprehension problem. That happens later. First low-income kids fall behind in the teachable reading skills—vocabulary and word recognition—because they don't have access to sophisticated reading material at home, as more favored kids do.

By the time these kids reach junior high, the content of their school reading is getting difficult (science and social studies texts, for instance), and they can no longer use context to compensate for their lack of word knowledge. At that point, their comprehension begins to fall.

What can schools do?

►Don't go whole hog on whole language, especially in the primary grades. Kids need some structure (basals and workbooks) at this age.

► Don't let kids concentrate on easy-to-read fiction trade books at the intermediate level. Find science and social studies textbooks that lower-ability kids can read and learn from.

► After grade 4, don't let "hands-on" science and social studies projects substitute for learning by reading.

► Don't give kids easy-to-read stuff. Instead, challenge them to read books that are a cut above their ability level.

► Maintain a bountiful classroom library of fiction, nonfiction, and reference books.

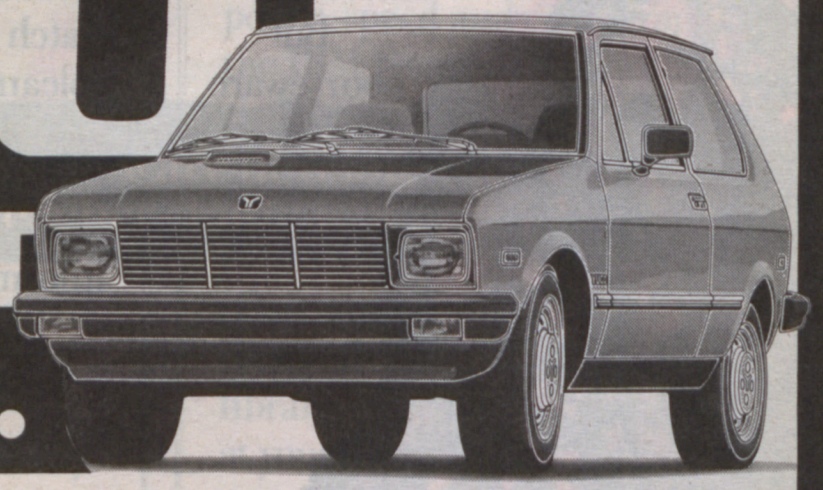
One caveat: the kids in this study—kids with average reading achievement from low-income families—come from a narrow band in the total range of kids. The activities mentioned here for certain grade levels may be different for kids at other developmental levels.

A companion book, to follow, will describe what was different about the homes of children in the study who didn't fall behind in reading.

—Nancy R. Needham

YUGO

IT'S TIME TO GET BACK TO BASICS.



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PERSONALLY SPEAKING

7th IN A SERIES

Saving for College, Willing Your

WEALTH.

April is kids' month for the Montgomerys—both their children have birthdays. Evan will be 7 on April 14, and Erin will celebrate her second birthday on the 30th.

This birthday month seems a good time for Gregg and Nancy to focus on saving for college and writing wills. Even if your children weren't born in April, why not follow along with the Montgomerys?

Saving for college is one of the biggest financial concerns for most U.S. parents. For the 1989-90 school year, the average cost of one year is $6,671 at a four-year public college and $14,326 at a private college, according to the College Board. That figure includes tuition and fees, room and board in a dormitory, books and supplies, transportation, and miscellaneous expenses.

Tuition costs at public schools are rising sharply, by more than 6 percent a year. At that rate, a year's tuition will cost $12,664 when Evan is a freshman and $16,945 when Erin starts college five years later.

Costs for private institutions are increasing by about 8 percent a year. If that continues, a private-college freshman year would cost $33,403 for Evan, $49,080 for Erin.

The Montgomerys don't plan to send their kids to private colleges. Still, they know they need to start saving now. When Evan was born, they began putting a certain amount away for him each month, but after Erin was born they couldn't keep it up. They've saved only $800 for Evan and $100 for Erin. One of their goals for this year is to put away $50 a month for each of the children.

Under the Uniform Gifts to Minors Act, each parent can put up to $10,000 a year for each child into a custodial account without filing a gift tax return. That means a married couple can give up to $20,000 per child. Although Nancy and Gregg don't have that kind of money to put aside for the children, they like the tax advantage.

Here's how it works. Earnings on a custodial account aren't taxed until they reach $500 a year. Earnings between $500 a year and $1,000 a year are taxed at the child's rate. Once the account earns $1,000 a year, the money is taxed at the parent's highest marginal rate. When the child turns 14, the account is again taxed at the lower child's rate.

Money in a custodial account will compound more quickly—but once you put the money in the account, it belongs to your child. As soon as the child reaches your state's legal age, he or she can decide what to do with it—buy a motorcycle, maybe, instead of going to college. Some financial planners advise against custodial accounts, but others say that as long as you trust your child's good sense, the tax savings are worth it.

The Montgomerys have decided to use custodial accounts, and they've decided how much to invest. But any kind of investment can be set up as a custodial account, and they haven't decided what kind of investment to use. They need something that will allow them to start with a low initial investment and add money in increments of about $50 a month. They also need an investment that can grow.

The Montgomerys have 11 years to save for Evan and 16 years for Erin. With that much time, mutual funds would be a good choice. Gregg and Nancy plan to look further into investment options next month.

The other task on the Montgomerys' agenda this month is to plan wills. "That's one thing we haven't worked on at all," Nancy admits. "We've talked a little bit about what would happen to the children if we die, but we haven't done anything."

Many couples assume that if one spouse dies, whatever he or she owns will pass automatically to the other. That's just not true. All states have rules for the disposal of the property of those who die intestate (without a will). These might limit the surviving spouse's share of the assets to half, or even less—and put the rest directly in the hands of the children. This may not be the arrangement the couple have in mind.

Furthermore, if one of the Montgomerys died without a will, all that person's property would be frozen while the rules were sorted out. And if the property were split between the surviving spouse and the children, the spouse might have to account to a probate court for all the money spent on the children. If both Gregg and Nancy died without making provision for someone to raise the children, the court would appoint a guardian.

So the Montgomerys need to know the basics of estate planning. For example, some property goes directly to the beneficiary. This includes life insurance and property held jointly as well as assets from employee benefit plans such as pension, profit sharing, or 403(b) plans. Most everything else must go through probate (that's where the courts get involved). It's this other property that they need to allocate in their wills.

Before drawing up their wills, they'll need to list all their assets and where these are located. This includes property deeds, insurance policies, retirement accounts, and anything else they consider part of their estates. NEA Special Services' *Survivor's Guide* can help with this task. Then each one could simply provide that everything of value is to go to the other.

Gregg and Nancy will also need to appoint someone to execute their wills. The job of executor is time-consuming, and the best person to do it is the primary beneficiary. Each of the Montgomerys may want to appoint the other.

They'll also need a backup in case both of them die at once.

They'll need to pick a guardian for the children as well—someone who closely shares their values and would raise the children as they'd want them raised. They should get the permission of the people they want to name as executors and guardians. Then all they need do is see an attorney and have the wills drawn up for them to sign.

The Montgomerys should keep the originals of their wills in a safe place and give their attorney a copy.

If you've followed along with the Montgomerys through all the stages of financial planning, you'll be ready next month to look at investing. Gregg and Nancy need to decide where to invest the children's college money as well as their own nest egg.

—Mary Rowland

Willing While You're Able

Most people dislike making a will more than any other financial planning chore. For that reason, about 80 percent of Americans die without one. And that leaves an unfair burden on their loved ones. Writing a will takes very little time, and it's not very expensive.

You can simply call an attorney and say you want to leave everything to your spouse, your sibling, or a special friend and want to name that person the executor of your estate. Then all you need do is sign the will in the attorney's presence and take it home. The whole process might cost you about $150.

When you're writing a will, you should also consider how your property is titled. Property held "jointly with rights of survivorship" passes immediately to the surviving spouse without going through probate. Because it's not transferred by means of a will, it's exempt from state estate taxes.

But once you become a joint owner, you can't take back sole ownership unless the other owner agrees—it's a pretty inflexible way to own assets. If you live in one of the seven community property states (Arizona, California, Idaho, Louisiana, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington), there are advantages to holding your property as community property rather than in joint tenancy.

Wills are easily amended. Start simple and add amendments later if you need to. But trying to make changes yourself could nullify your will, so have the attorney draft them. If you decide to draw up a very specific, detailed will listing all your wishes, do your homework before you see the attorney. You'll save time and money by writing things out yourself and giving the attorney specific instructions on what you want done.

List all your assets—savings, investments, property, insurance policies, jewelry, anything of value. Don't forget information about Individual Retirement Accounts, pension plans, safe deposit boxes. If you have minor children, you'll need to name a trustee and a guardian. You'll also probably want to set up a trust for the inheritance they receive and spell out who will manage the money and how it will be spent until they reach adulthood.

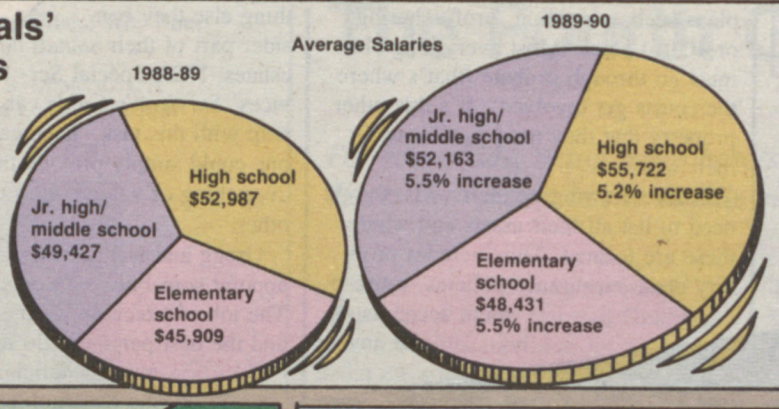
—M.R.

DATA BANK

Principals' Salaries

Principals' salaries beat the 4.8 percent inflation rate this year.

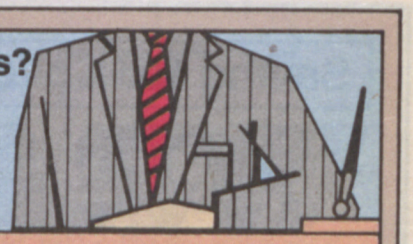
Source: National Association of Secondary School Principals



Who's on School Boards?

By and large, they're white men between the ages of 41 and 50. Here's the full statistical profile, in percentages.

Source: American School Board Journal/Virginia Tech survey, 1989.



Sex		Race/Ethnicity		Age	
Male:	66.2%	White:	93.2%	Under 40:	20.6%
Female:	33.8	Black:	4.6	41-50:	44.3
		Hispanic:	1.4	51-60:	21.0
		American Indian:	.6	Over 60:	13.6
		Asian:	.1		
		Other:	.1		

Treatment Gap

While President Bush and Drug Czar Bennett wage war on drugs on distant shores, only a few of the adolescents here at home who need treatment are getting it.

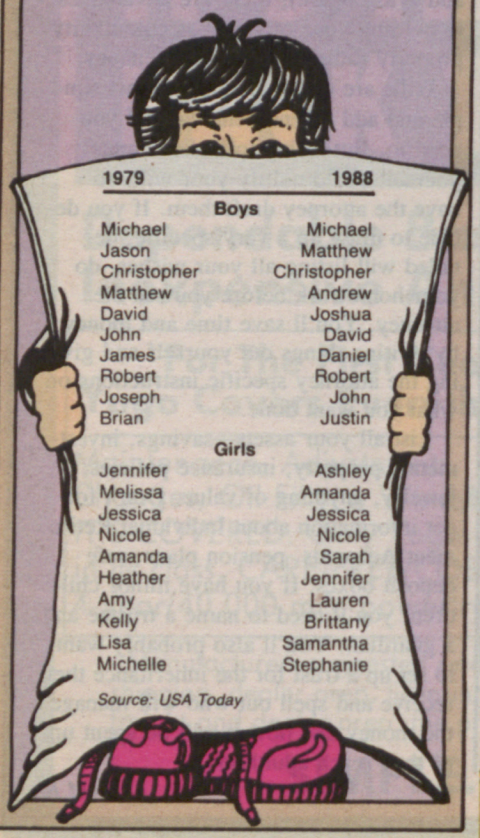
State	Number Receiving Treatment	Number on Waiting Lists for Treatment
Florida	10,600	60,000
Indiana	9,048	109,693
North Carolina	4,600	95,000
New Hampshire	1,329	26,000
Oregon	1,181	18,030
Texas	2,479	200,000
U.S. Total*	123,525*	1,601,996*

*Numbers available for only 40 states.

Source: National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors, 1989.

The Name Game

The most popular children's names changed a bit in the 1980s.



1979	1988
Boys	
Michael	Michael
Jason	Matthew
Christopher	Christopher
Matthew	Andrew
David	Joshua
John	David
James	Daniel
Robert	Robert
Joseph	John
Brian	Justin
Girls	
Jennifer	Ashley
Melissa	Amanda
Jessica	Jessica
Nicole	Nicole
Amanda	Sarah
Heather	Jennifer
Amy	Lauren
Kelly	Brittany
Lisa	Samantha
Michelle	Stephanie

Source: USA Today

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YOU AND YOUR RETIREMENT

Choosing a Retirement Home

Next to economic choices, the most important retirement decision you can make is where to live. Think now about this vital question.

Counselors say many unhappy retirements result from unsound housing choices. So when you start thinking about where to live after retirement, be sure you ask yourself the right questions.

► How's your health—and how's your pocketbook?

► How important is being near family and friends?

► What lifestyle do you want?

Remember, reality can be very different from expectation. Many people who fantasize about sunny Florida, for instance, end up missing their relatives or the changing seasons back home.

Keep in mind, too, that you'll need to plan for two phases of retirement. At first, you'll probably want access to a lot of activities, but as time passes, health and security will matter more.

Below are several options.

Your Own Home

Many people want to live in their present home for as long as possible. It's convenient, familiar, close to friends and neighbors, and full of comforting memories. But sometimes people feel forced to leave the home they love. If you feel pressured to move, especially later in your retirement, consider these alternatives:

If the house is too big or too expensive to run: You can take in a roomer or share the house with a friend or family member. You can sell the house to someone willing to rent it back to you on a long-term or lifetime lease, or you can take out a "reverse mortgage."

You can take out a special deferred payment home repair or improvement loan from a local government housing or community development agency. You won't have to start paying off such a loan until you move out of the house.

If you need physical assistance: Community agencies offer many services—from transportation, social activities, and help with meals to financial and health counseling—for older people living at home. Check with your area Agency on Aging, or with state and local health and social services departments.

A New Place

You may be looking for a new place to live that's smaller, easier to maintain, more economical, or in a better climate. This could mean moving down the block or halfway around the globe. In either case, start researching your move now. Pay special attention to—

Financial implications. Will you sell or rent your old home? How will you pay for your new one? What will be the tax impact of selling your home? Do you know how to invest the proceeds wisely? To avoid big mistakes, talk with your financial planner, tax adviser, or accountant.

The cost of living. Research housing costs, taxes, and the price of the services and activities you'll want.

Public services. What kinds of medical care and government services are available? Will the new location offer better or worse trash removal, road maintenance, ambulance service, public libraries? How much do you care?

Surroundings. Can you take the heat (or the cold)? Can you make the switch from big city to small town, or vice versa? Can you adapt to a new "culture"?

Companionship. Do you really want to be separated from family and friends? Do you really want to be closer to them?

A good way to make up your mind about retiring to a spot is to vacation regularly there. You'll get a feel for what life there is really like and have a chance to start making new friends.

Senior Housing

If your health isn't perfect but you want to live independently, your choices include—

Senior communities and apartments. A wide range of communities and apartments cater to people over a certain age. Their housing space is physically accessible, and many offer special services and programs. Their cost varies from modest to posh.

Continuing care retirement communities. Sometimes called "lifecare communities," these offer everything from independent living to 24-hour nursing care in a single setting. Many ask you to pay an initial entry fee and sign a contract stating the services and fees to be provided. You'll also pay a monthly fee that increases regularly.

Assisted living facilities. These are designed for people with minor health problems that require regular medical oversight.

Sorting through claims and promises made by facilities for the retired can be difficult. Before you sign a legally binding contract, it's a good idea to consult an attorney. Association members in many states are eligible for free or discounted legal help through NEA's Attorney Referral Program.

As you begin to plan your retirement, finding help and resources is important. By joining NEA-Retired, you get access to a variety of services, including preretirement publications and seminars, discounts, and a new regular publication, *The Best Years*. Of particular interest to those weighing their housing options is the booklet *Home and Safety*, available free to life NEA-R members (those who have paid $100 for a Lifetime NEA-R membership). For more information, write to NEA-Retired, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036.

More Help

Other sources of information on retirement housing options include—

American Association of Homes for the Aging, 1129 20th St., N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20036.

National Center for Home Equity Conversion, 110 East Main St., Madison, WI 53703.

National Consumers League, 815 15th St., N.W., Suite 516, Washington, DC 20003.

United Seniors Health Cooperative, 1334 G St., N.W., Suite 500, Washington, DC 20005.

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RESEARCH CLUES

What Place Homework?

By Robert McNergney and Martin Haberman

A few years ago, a noted American scholar remarked to a reporter that our nation's educational problems would be solved if every high school student had to do three hours of homework each night. Was this a sound recommendation or the ravings of a madman?

Some new research sheds some light on the question. Harris Cooper of the University of Missouri has reviewed original research on homework, done some research of his own, and leveled a critical gaze on professional and governmental recommendations.

Here are some of Cooper's conclusions and recommendations (and, in parentheses, some of our reactions).

► School districts should set common expectations for homework. The number of mandatory assignments per week and the time devoted to them should be well within these limits:

Grades 1 to 3—one to three assignments no more than 15 minutes each.

Grades 4 to 6—two to four assignments between 15 and 45 minutes each.

Grades 7 to 9—three to five assignments between 45 and 75 minutes each.

Grades 10 to 12—four to five assignments between 75 and 120 minutes each.

All grade levels—additional voluntary assignments at the teacher's discretion.

► Every teacher should have certain days for giving assignments and a specified share of the students' total weekly homework.

► The teacher should always spell out for students (a) how an assignment relates to the topics they're studying; (b) the purpose of the assignment; (c) the best way to do the assignment; and (d) how to demonstrate that they've completed the assignment.

► A homework assignment intended to foster achievement should focus on skills that require practice. One meant to generate interest in a topic should be more challenging, requiring use of higher-order thinking skills.

► Teachers should make sure students have the resources to do assignments that call for providing objects from home. (Beware, for example, of the science fair!)

► There's no evidence that homework increases young children's achievement. But there's plenty of reason to think it can (a) promote good attitudes and good study habits, (b) dispel the idea that learning occurs only in school, and (c) give parents opportunities to express how much they value education. (Why not start the practice in kindergarten?)

A few remaining points:

► Homework is more effective at higher grades than at lower grades.

► Don't expect students to teach themselves complex skills at home.

► Grade homework infrequently if at all. But collect all homework and use it to diagnose learning difficulties. (Even if you don't grade homework, you should let students know you examine it and care about it.)

► Don't expect even your best students to always finish their homework. And remember that for poorly performing students, missing assignments is a symptom of deeper problems.

► Administrators need to communicate homework policy to parents, monitor the policy, and coordinate scheduling of homework among teachers if necessary.

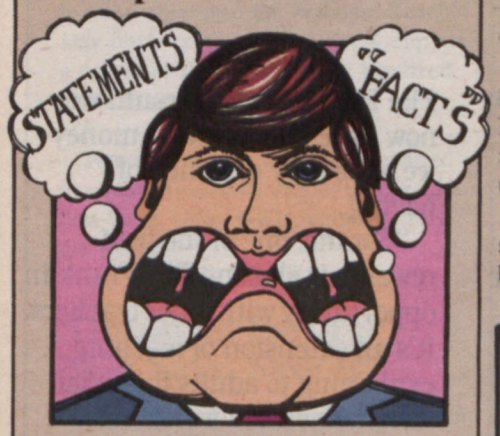
► Kids need time to be kids. Don't let overemphasis on mental discipline blow homework out of proportion.

For more details, read H. M. Cooper, *Homework*. New York: Longman, 1989.

Robert McNergney is a professor of education and director of the Commonwealth Center for the Education of Teachers, University of Virginia and James Madison University, Charlottesville, VA 22903. Martin Haberman is a professor at the School of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI 53201. They prepared this column for NEA Today *with the cooperation of the American Educational Research Association.*

TRENDS

Who'll Stop the Precipitation?



In a world where neutron bombs are presented as "enhanced radiation devices" and acid rain passes as "poorly buffered precipitation," many English teachers are looking for agreement, not just between subjects and verbs, but between statements and facts.

To help people develop a critical ear for public statements, members of the Committee on Public Doublespeak of the National Council of Teachers of English have put together a collection of 18 essays called *Beyond Nineteen Eighty-Four: Doublespeak in a Post-Orwellian Age*. Contributors examine the way media shape perceptions and the types and uses of doublespeak.

The 220-page book is available for $15.95 from NCTE, 1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801.

Sorry, Charlie

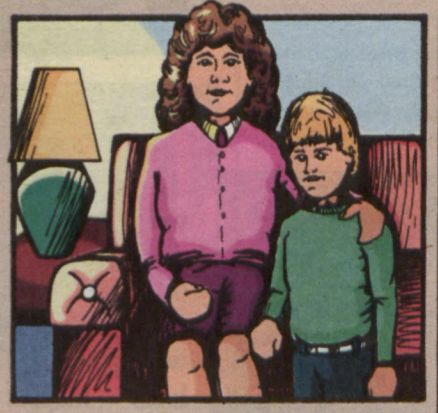
Environmentally conscious students at Gateway High School in Aurora, Colo., are just saying no to tuna.

Concerned for the dolphins that are killed in tuna nets, they convinced the Board of Education to remove tuna from the school lunch menu throughout the 26,000-student district.

Back in December, Milford, Conn., students voted for a districtwide tuna ban.

My Mother, My Self-Concept?

Contrary to popular belief, a child's self-concept may not be greatly affected by whether he or she lives with one parent or two, suggests a small comparative study by researchers at Central Michigan University.



The researchers paired 38 third graders, half of whom lived with two parents, half with one parent. One surprising revelation: in general, children have lower self-esteem than parents and teachers think they do, no matter who their family members are.

Another unexpected finding: girls from two-parent households had the lowest self-concepts of all.

Better Living Through Engineering

Anybody who doesn't believe engineering changes our lives should take a look at the 10 most important engineering accomplishments of the past 25 years, picked by the National Academy of Engineering.

The Academy's choices: the moon landing; application satellites; microprocessors; computer-aided design and manufacturing; the CAT scan; advanced composite materials; the jumbo jet; lasers; fiber optics; and genetic engineering.

The Number One Killer

Just when you thought it was safe for your child to cross residential streets alone, the National Center for Health Statistics reports that pedestrian accidents have become the most common cause of serious injury and death in young school-age children.

The NCHS figures are cited in a study, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, suggesting that many parents overestimate their children's ability to observe safety rules.

The authors conclude that to reduce pedestrian injuries, parents will have to learn more about their children's developmental limitations so they won't let them cross streets or walk to school alone before they're able to do it safely. Other components of a good preventive program: skills training for youngsters, community education, environmental modification, and better law enforcement.

INTERNATIONAL

A Window to the World

Since the Peace Corps was created nearly 30 years ago, one of its goals has been to promote cross-cultural understanding. Volunteers have presented images of America—then come home bringing images of the world.

Now, those same volunteers are bringing their cross-cultural experiences and understandings to American classrooms through a unique program called World Wise Schools.

Created three years ago by Peace Corps Director Paul Coverdell, the program now links Peace Corps volunteers with 800 schools nationwide.

Ed Rova, a fifth and sixth grade teacher at Meadowbrook Elementary School in Minneapolis, Minn., is helping his students prepare for contact with John Mann, a Peace Corps volunteer living and working in Niger, West Africa. Meadowbrook students will correspond with Mann; Mann will act as an educational resource for Meadowbrook.

"In this age, we need to be aware of the world around us," adds Rova. "Meadowbrook can be more than just a school in Minneapolis; it can be a link to people of other countries."

For more information on World Wise Schools, call 800-424-8580, x288, or write Peace Corps' World Wise Schools, 1990 K St., N.W., Rm. 8500, Washington, DC 20526.

For Children's Sake

For years Amnesty International's Urgent Action campaign has kept volunteers informed of human rights abuses—and told them how to lodge written protests. Many times the communications—and resulting pressure—have stopped abuses throughout the world.

Now AI has created a Children's Special Edition of its newsletter, detailing abuses of children's human rights and urging students as well as teachers to take action.

Sample cases: Mlindeli Simanane, age 14, jailed without charge in South Africa, and Pedro Santiago, age 5, taken by soldiers from his home and detained in Guatemala. Urgent Action coordinator Ellen Moore says these are typical of the many children's cases the newsletter presents.

For more information on the Children's Special Edition of the Amnesty International Urgent Action Newsletters, contact the Urgent Action Program Office, P.O. Box 1270, Nederland, CO 80466-1270.

Linking and Learning

In a small village in England, American elementary school students living abroad collect scientific information about their host country. Then, via electronic mail, they communicate with students in U.S. classrooms, comparing and analyzing data, asking and answering questions.

The budding scientists—students of Judy Dotson, a fifth grade teacher at Croughton Elementary School near Upper Haford, England, and a member of the Overseas Education Association—are participating in Kids Network. Sponsored by the National Geographic Society, the Network provides teaching guides, wall maps, student handbooks, and Apple IIGS software.

"My students have the chance to learn scientific methods and conduct their own research," says Dotson. "They're not just learning science, they're living it."

With significant results. Scientists doing acid rain research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are using data Dotson's students collected, according to Jane Tully, public affairs director of the National Geographic Society.

Dotson's students are also learning about home. "These kids are making real connections with their homeland and with other students," adds Dotson. "Many of them have grown up overseas, and this type of contact is very exciting."

For more information on the National Geographic Kids Network program, write The National Geographic Society, Dept. 1001, Washington, DC 20036.

—Anita Merina

Franklin's "hat trick" increased Jack Moyer's income six-fold.

Jack and Nancy Moyer.

Just a few years ago, Jack Moyer of Avon, Connecticut wore a lot of hats — high school Science and Government teacher, P.E. teacher, head basketball coach, Driver's Ed instructor . . . even principal. "There had to be a better way," Jack remembers. "I was often working 12 hours a day six days a week."

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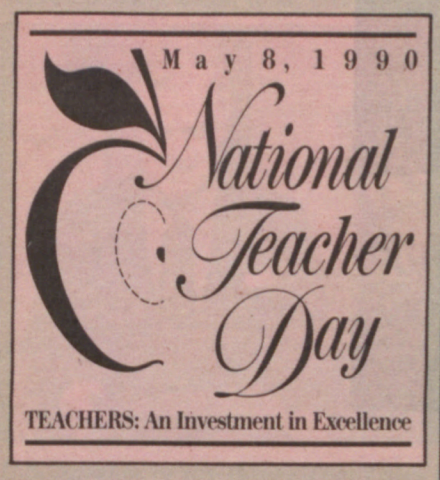
YourNEA

REACHING OUT

'Teachers: An Investment In Excellence'

Tuesday, May 8, is this year's National Teacher Day—a day set aside for a public salute to teachers. The 1990 theme is "Teachers: An Investment in Excellence."

NEA is sending local Associations a booklet to help them celebrate Teacher Day. It provides a wealth of innovative project ideas that locals carried out in communities across the country last year—from placing National Teacher Day ads in newspapers to sponsoring a student essay contest with savings bonds for the winners.



The kit also contains sample Teacher Day radio spots, a suggested news release to announce the National Teacher Day observance, camera-ready clip art, a one-page flyer that can be localized, and a printed proclamation for public officials to sign.

National Teacher Day is celebrated in conjunction with Teacher Appreciation Week (May 6-12), sponsored by the National PTA.

'Operation Earth': NEA Says, Save It!

Local NEA affiliates and members can order a variety of specially prepared posters, stickers, and booklets full of environmental tips to back up activities they're planning for Earth Day (April 22). NEA is distributing the materials in cooperation with "Operation Earth," public TV's year-long environmental programming and community outreach campaign.

The theme of the materials produced by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Public Television Outreach Alliance is "Save It!," with the dot on the exclamation mark transforming itself into the earth. The focus is on individual action—what individuals can do in daily life to help save the environment.

"Save It!" materials include the following items—

► ***Booklet.*** *"Save It!" Easy Environmental Tips to Save the Earth,* a 16-page (8½" x 11") illustrated booklet, focuses on what individuals can do to make a difference by making responsible decisions for the environment's future. Written for use by junior high and high school students, educators, parents, individuals, and community groups, *"Save It!"* contains concise explanations of key environmental problems (air, water, and land pollution) and energy conservation. A section on shopping explains how our buying choices affect the environment.

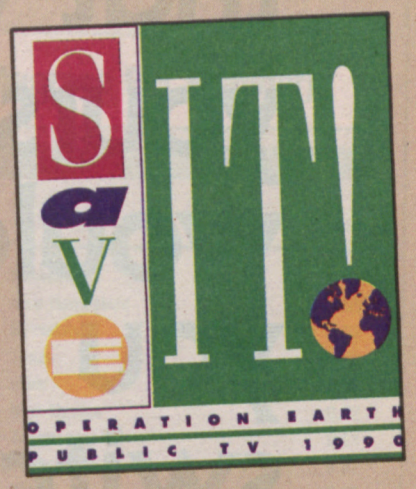
The booklet also gives easy, straightforward environmental tips and suggests interesting group activities.

► ***Poster.*** A color "Save It!" poster (17" x 22") covering public television's 1990 "Operation Earth" activities and environmental programming (more than 40 programs and series) can be displayed in classrooms, clubs, offices, and community centers.

► ***Sticker.*** A colorful, removable 6"x 7" "Save It!" sticker indicating a commitment to environmental awareness is suitable for display on bumpers, bulletin boards, or notebooks.

Group/classroom kits containing 35 booklets, 35 stickers, and one poster are available for $39.95, including shipping and handling. All materials can be ordered separately in quantities of 100 or more.

Orders must be prepaid, with checks payable to Custom Print, Inc. To order, write or call "Save It!" c/o Custom Print, Inc., 2611 Shirlington Rd., Arlington, VA 22206; 703-979-8473.



LOOKING BACK

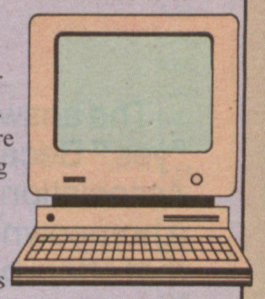
Computers for All In Mississippi

As part of its education reform effort (StateSide, Feb.), Mississippi plans to put an IBM computer and IBM's Writing To Read program in every kindergarten and first grade classroom in the next three years. The goal: that every child be able to read and write before reaching second grade.

Backing the plan are two millionaires who contributed $7 million, with the stipulation that the state buy IBM computers and the IBM Writing To Read program. The state has put up an additional $6 million.

Mississippi Association of Educators President Peggy Peterson is enthusiastic. "Teachers view the computers as providing an opportunity for students to read and write much sooner than before," she says. "Learning gains are much more rapid. It's an effort to move our students into the 21st century."

A proposed lottery plan that would have provided a significant share of needed reform funding failed to pass the legislature, but Peterson says the idea is resurfacing and could appear as a referendum on the November ballot. "We're hoping that Governor Mabus will call a special legislative session to deal with the education package," she says.



At Last: Indian Census Data

Dan Kane

To find the best solutions for problems facing the American Indian today, we need more and better statistical information ("Breaking with the Past," March 1989). A small step in that direction came from the Census Bureau recently when—10 years after completing its count—it released a report on American Indians. The Bureau says budget constraints delayed publication of the 1980 data.

Along with its official count of 1,478,523 American Indians, the Bureau provides information—by tribe—on median family income, high school graduation rates, and poverty rates.

According to Bureau figures, only two tribes—the Comanche and the Kiowa—have graduation rates higher than the U.S. average of 66.5 percent. Poverty rate figures are even bleaker: The national average is 12.4 percent, but tribes report rates ranging from 30 to 45 percent.

NEA Members Featured on TV

The story of how four teacher Association members from Deer River, Minn., dealt with racism in their classrooms ("Teacher Recognition Set," Dec.) will be told in a prime-time television drama—*Everyday Heroes*—to air nationally sometime this month.

The teachers—Myrna Peterson, Janet Florine, Dennis Peterson, and Yvonne Wilson—faced subtle, powerful racial tension between their American Indian and white students. As 1989 Fellows of the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education's (NFIE) Christa McAuliffe Institute for Educational Pioneering, they developed a multimedia program to build understanding between the two groups.

Everyday Heroes was created by Apple Computer, NFIE, the National Alliance of Business, and Group W Television.

NEA members (seated, left to right) Dennis Peterson, Janet Florine, Yvonne Wilson, and Myrna Peterson pose with the actors who will portray them in an upcoming television drama.

Anita & Steve Shevett

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NEA-PAC

Shooting for the Competitive Edge

What does it take to reshape national priorities? How can our public educational system get the government support it needs to do its job well? A big part of the answer: competitiveness.

In a democracy, people who care about public policy compete to influence the outcome of the legislative process. For educators, that means actively promoting measures that will benefit public education. And in the intensely competitive world of national politics, that in turn means backing up commitments to lawmakers with effective political programs and contributions.

The Washington Education Association (WEA) has long been a leader in educating its members about the importance of contributions to NEA-PAC, NEA's political action fund. Over the years WEA has consistently ranked among the top five NEA state affiliates in average per-member contributions.

No wonder Speaker of the House Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) has a clear sense of the importance of education—and relies on WEA and NEA to support lawmakers who back the education measures in Congress.

"In the 1990s and well into the next century," says Foley, "the greatest test of our strength will be in our schools. In the effort to refocus our national priorities, NEA will be an influential participant."

How does WEA maintain its outstanding record of political commitment?

"Persistence," says WEA President Carla Nuxoll. "We're determined to ask all our members to do their fair share by contributing to NEA-PAC through ongoing payroll deduction."

Joe Di Dio

U.S. Speaker of the House Tom Foley talks politics with Washington Education Association activist Joanne Christopher, a member of NEA's Congressional Contact Team.

"When your state has the honor of being represented by the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives," Nuxoll continues, "you have extra incentive to think about the importance of education to our nation."

This spring WEA will be conducting a new campaign of one-on-one contacts to ask members for their voluntary contributions to help meet the Association's PAC fundraising goals.

"We're proud of our efforts and our average contribution: $2.74 per member," notes President Nuxoll. "But there's still a lot of work to be done to reach the NEA goal of $10 per member."

Meanwhile, if every state affiliate matched Washington's average contribution, NEA-PAC's intake would top $5 million this year.

NEA-PAC Contributions (Average Per Member)

State	1988-89*	State	1988-89*
Wyoming	$3.38	Florida	$1.05
Hawaii	3.13	New Hampshire	1.05
Nevada	3.02	Kentucky	1.02
Washington	2.74	Texas	1.02
Oregon	2.56	Utah	0.96
N. Dakota	2.30	New Mexico	0.92
Delaware	2.10	Tennessee	0.91
Overseas	1.97	Kansas	0.87
Rhode Island	1.97	Ohio	0.87
Alaska	1.78	S. Carolina	0.87
Alabama	1.76	Louisiana	0.83
Nebraska	1.75	Maine	0.82
California	1.69	Minnesota	0.82
Montana	1.66	Indiana	0.76
Mississippi	1.64	Wisconsin	0.70
S. Dakota	1.62	Georgia	0.69
Connecticut	1.60	Oklahoma	0.69
Arizona	1.43	N. Carolina	0.63
Pennsylvania	1.39	Virginia	0.60
Maryland	1.36	West Virginia	0.56
Michigan	1.36	New Jersey	0.53
Colorado	1.25	Iowa	0.52
Illinois	1.25	New York	0.45
Idaho	1.21	Arkansas	0.42
Missouri	1.19	Massachusetts	0.17
Vermont	1.17	Puerto Rico	0.06
		Average	1.15

*Average Per Member Based on 5/31/88 Member Count.

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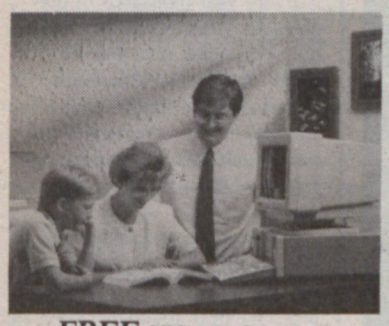

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Exchanges are available with 26 countries in Eastern and Western Europe, Latin America, Africa, and with Canada and the Philippines.

An applicant must be a U.S. citizen with at least a bachelor's degree, have a current full-time teaching assignment in the subject field of the exchange, and have at least three years of teaching experience.

For more information and an application form for the fall 1991 program, write:

Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program (E/ASX)
U.S. Information Agency, 301 Fourth Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547

The application deadline is October 15, 1990.

Letters

Tough To Decide

Having read your Debate entitled "Should Schools Abolish Remedial Education?" (Debate, March), I found myself siding with both teachers' rationales for and against remedial courses. It substantiates my belief that what is truly essential and common to all good education is the caring, innovative, and dedicated teacher who is willing to establish a plan and direct the education of his or her students and follow through with boundless enthusiasm, dedication, and belief in the singular potential of the student.

In my own state of Maine, Bill Nave has been chosen as a finalist for the National Teacher of the Year (People, March). His goal is to offer the best possible educational plan to each and every one of the students in his alternative education program. As long as we teachers take the time to cherish and nurture those we teach, and treat them as unique individuals, our ideas and programs will thrive and our children will be well-served.

Steve Saunders
Readfield, Maine

Good Work

I just want to take a moment to tell you that trends in recent issues of *NEA Today* are very positive. I find the magazine very pertinent and interesting, and even with my busy schedule, I stop to read many articles.

Practical articles such as "Tax Tips for Teachers" and classroom suggestions such as "Taking the Mystery Out of Video" are great, as are opinions such as the debate about the "me generation."

Thanks. Keep up the good work!

P.S. How about some help on how to juggle advanced education (continuing ed., master's degree, etc.) with work schedules?

Cheryl Lessard
Colton, California

Accidental Incident

During a recent "snow day," I gave myself an unusual treat—reading the March issue from cover to cover in one sitting. It proved to be one of the best yet!

However, I noticed an error on page 12, the TV and Radio Tips.

The picture accompanying the announcement of the ABC Afterschool Special concerning drunk driving, aired March 22, is incorrect. The picture shows the two leading characters from the CBS and AT&T presentation "The Incident," starring Walter Matthau, which was shown on March 4. The title of the ABC special is "The Accident." As the titles are very similar, such an error is easily made.

Perhaps others have already pointed out this mistake, but I couldn't let it go by without calling your attention to it. My red correcting pen operates on automatic pilot even on "days off," it seems.

Again, I enjoy our professional newspaper very much.

Shirley Forsman
Enfield, Connecticut

Vote for Fellows

I am an employee of the Winthrop public schools and just recently read the March issue of *NEA Today*. I was very interested in the People section, which featured the Teacher of the Year finalists. It is very important to spotlight our nation's top educators.

I was wondering if you planned to do an article on the Christa McAuliffe Fellows. I know it would be difficult to cover them all, but how about doing just a few?

I do have a hidden agenda. One of our teachers has been given this award for 1990-91. We are very proud of him; he has brought praise and recognition to not only himself, but our small town.

Many of us hope that you will consider an article on Bob Cuddi and the other Christa McAuliffe Fellows.

Jeannette Benson
Boston, Massachusetts

Ed. Note: We do plan stories about the Christa McAuliffe Fellows in upcoming issues.

Unprincipled?

As my wife is an NEA member, your publication is of particular interest to me. As a school administrator, I am anxious to keep current with the many fine educational publications available today.

Your article "What Kind of Principal Do You Have?" (Feb.) left me quite troubled.

The "new breed principal" referred to in the article is well-known in our district. However, the casual reader who may not have proceeded beyond the article's subheading, "School principals have traditionally come in four varieties. What kind do you have? What kind should you have? What kind is best suited for the self-managing schools of the 21st century?" may easily have been left with the impression that *NEA Today* was engaging in principal-bashing, a most unbecoming practice. This unfortunate reference was readily reinforced by your choice of four demeaning graphic representations of "traditional" principal stereotypes.

In this important era of education, it is unfortunate that a former NEA motto, "We're all in this together!" seems to have been situationally forgotten. Furthermore, such an inflammatory piece of journalism does nothing to enhance NEA's claim to being a professional organization; rather, it reinforces those who believe NEA to be a mere union. (It is ironic that another article in the same issue is entitled "We, the Teacher: In Pursuit of Professionalism.")

I personally and professionally resent this piece being published in *NEA Today*. Ethical professionals do not mistreat other professionals. Congratulations on now being two million members strong. I wonder if you have two million members proud.

Michael Deweese
Richford, Vermont

Good Advice

"Don't Wait Til It's Too LATE" (You and Your Retirement, Feb.), was an article worth clipping, and the recommended guides were worth requesting. Having some idea what to expect in the aftermath of a spouse's death will decrease anxiety and confusing decisions during a time when one's energy and time are limited by the business of grief.

I'd never anticipated my teaching job to be our sole source of income when my husband died at age 34, leaving me with basically the same expenses: two children, home, car.

Careful financial planning can make the best of a bad situation. Death should not make us victims twice.

Jean Serusa Maloney
Fairport, New York

Teen Talk

I am writing in regard to "Should Dropouts Be Denied Driver's Licenses?" (Debate, Feb.) Many statements were made, all well supported with facts from both sides. But they were made from an adult's point of view. I am writing as a 16-year-old, with the voice of many teenagers behind me. As Bruce Fessenden said, "Legislators have no experience working with teens, but teachers and counselors do." Yet he said nothing about the teenager's feelings, as if they didn't matter.

If teens who drop out are to have their licenses revoked, what about the adults who are 30 and still don't have a diploma or G.E.D.? What are they to do? To be fair, one should take away theirs too, but one can't just take what may be their only source of transportation—especially since they may have to drive in order to make a living.

It's a proven fact that this proposal works for some, because the dropout rate in West Virginia decreased a total of 30 percent. This is great; I am all for it and think that this law saying that people should stay in school until they earn their diploma or G.E.D. should be enacted.

Yet there are some loose ends that are not covered in the article, such as—What is the age limit? What about an adult with a job who can't do without a driver's license? Also, what are the guidelines for emergency or special situations?

This law is good and will certainly serve its purpose, but I also think it needs a little fine-tuning. Maybe a conference among a few legislators, teachers, counselors, and teenagers can improve the law to suit all ages.

Jennifer Dreher
Lincoln, Nebraska

A Vote Against Tuna

This month I caught up on five back issues of *NEA Today*! I was delighted to see the October article on Ken Leche collecting food for the hungry (People, Oct.)—it is an activity in which I am also involved. But why tuna?

Every year thousands of dolphins are killed needlessly because they swim with tuna and are caught in the nets. American fishermen have found a way to release them, but unfortunately, the bulk of our tuna still comes from Japan, where no progress has been made.

My husband and I and most of our friends have supported a tuna boycott for seven or eight years now. We have found mackerel and canned chicken to be good substitutes.

We need to feed the world without destroying our environment.

Connie Molbeck
Racine, Wisconsin

Address correspondence to "Letters," NEA Today, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. We reserve the right to edit letters for length.

Debate

Should Schools Enforce Dress Codes?

YES

David Olds

Dale Myers teaches fifth grade at E. E. Knight Elementary School in Elsie, a small town in central Michigan. A 14-year teaching veteran, Myers is president of the Ovid-Elsie Education Association and has been a negotiator for the local for the past 5 years.

Dress codes are good for the learning climate in a school, but they're so difficult to enforce that they sometimes create trouble without achieving their potential benefits. Someone always seems ready to challenge a code's meaning or its intent. But it's possible to avoid such hassles by going one step further. Why not adopt the ultimate dress code—a school uniform?

School uniforms offer many advantages—so many that the school community is likely to accept the idea of uniforms, if students and parents understand how they'll benefit from them. A few key points:

► *Dress codes cut down on distractions that keep students from concentrating on their lessons.*

Outside factors can distract kids from the primary purpose of school—education. Today, children as young as six are concerned about looking "cool" in school. Where does learning fit into their priorities?

A school uniform eliminates competition to have the most desirable clothing. When students are all wearing the same outfit, they can concentrate better on schoolwork, and parents and teachers can stop worrying about that particular type of distraction.

► *Uniforms increase students' self-confidence.*

Students may develop strong feelings of inferiority when they don't have the "right" clothes. Kids are often prejudiced against classmates who don't have clothes with popular brand names or who have to wear hand-me-downs. This attitude, whether it's deliberate or accidental, is destructive for those who hold it and is often devastating for the recipients as well.

► *School uniforms produce an* esprit de corps *among students of the school.*

A uniform can build the same feeling of unity and belonging that so many students get from team uniforms, cheerleading outfits, and jackets.

► *School uniforms reduce students' clothing costs.*

Once a uniform style is decided on, the school can take bulk orders to purchase uniforms at cost. Or the school may choose to make a small profit and devote the proceeds to school activities. Either way, the uniforms for the year will cost far less than students under peer pressure would feel driven to spend for a year's wardrobe.

Some parents may find that a school uniform reduces their transportation costs, since there's no longer a need to shop for school clothes.

► *School uniforms can improve classroom behavior.*

Clothing influences the way students see themselves. Uniforms can encourage them to live up to group standards.

► *School uniforms remove some of the causes of school crime, violence, and gang activity.*

In some schools, students are killed or injured by other students who covet what they're wearing.

Students whose families can't afford to buy them the clothes they want may turn to illegal activities to get money.

In schools plagued by student gangs, gang members wear color-coded clothing to communicate with one another. In some instances, especially in urban schools, principals have banned items of clothing chosen by the gangs as a way of keeping gang activity off campus.

Adopting school uniforms would solve all these problems.

► *School uniforms create greater school recognition.*

Many people subscribe to the notion that private institutions have a monopoly on academic prowess. One of the reasons this thinking prevails is that private school uniforms create the impression that the wearers constitute an elite corps.

In many countries of the world, public school students—at least the younger ones—wear uniforms. Japan—whose schools hold fascination for many Americans—is one of them.

For all these reasons—and because dress codes are almost impossible to enforce—it's simply good sense for schools to adopt student uniforms.

NO

Ken Akers

Debbie Cameron is a 16-year classroom veteran who currently teaches math at South Mountain High School in Phoenix, Ariz. She's served as a delegate to the Arizona Education Association Delegate Assembly and as a member of her local negotiating team.

A dress code is nothing more than subtle—or not-so-subtle—harassment of students, a power struggle to make people who have less force at their disposal follow our rules.

Just what is our objective as teachers? I feel that I'm in the classroom to encourage students to understand—and maybe even like—the subject matter I teach. That objective isn't served by coercing, manipulating, or humiliating them.

For students, dressing is a way of relating to others and feeling they belong to a group. Limiting the choices they can exercise in this aspect of growing up can restrict their development both while they're in school and in later life.

One of my students once came to class with a shaved head because someone decided—without consulting him—to give him a "real haircut." The youngster begged me to let him keep his hat on to avoid embarrassment and humiliation. If my school had had a hard-and-fast rule against wearing a hat in class, this boy would have suffered his classmates' ridicule.

When students feel comfortable and secure in class, they're receptive to learning rather than distracted by feeling angry or embarrassed because of the way they look.

Forcing students to conform to a dress code wastes a lot of energy, for both teachers and students. I have only 55 minutes each day to get the lesson I've prepared across to the class—and I don't want to spend any part of that time distracting or alienating students because of their manner of dress.

Dress codes cause economic hardships for students and parents who can't afford the clothing the school requires. And a kid who doesn't normally wear that type of clothing might just decide that it would be easier not to attend school at all than to buy a new wardrobe.

Then there's the issue of the weather. Here in Phoenix, the temperature can be quite high at certain times of the year. Naturally, the way we dress greatly affects how comfortable we feel.

When someone's dressed inappropriately for the weather and so is feeling uncomfortable, it's difficult for that person to listen and learn. The heat can affect a student's ability to concentrate and retain learning.

Finally, difficulty in enforcing dress codes may cause conflict among parents, students, and schools.

Dress codes place schools in an adversary role toward both students and parents. It's far better for educators and administrators to encourage students to attend school and convince them that we're on their side.

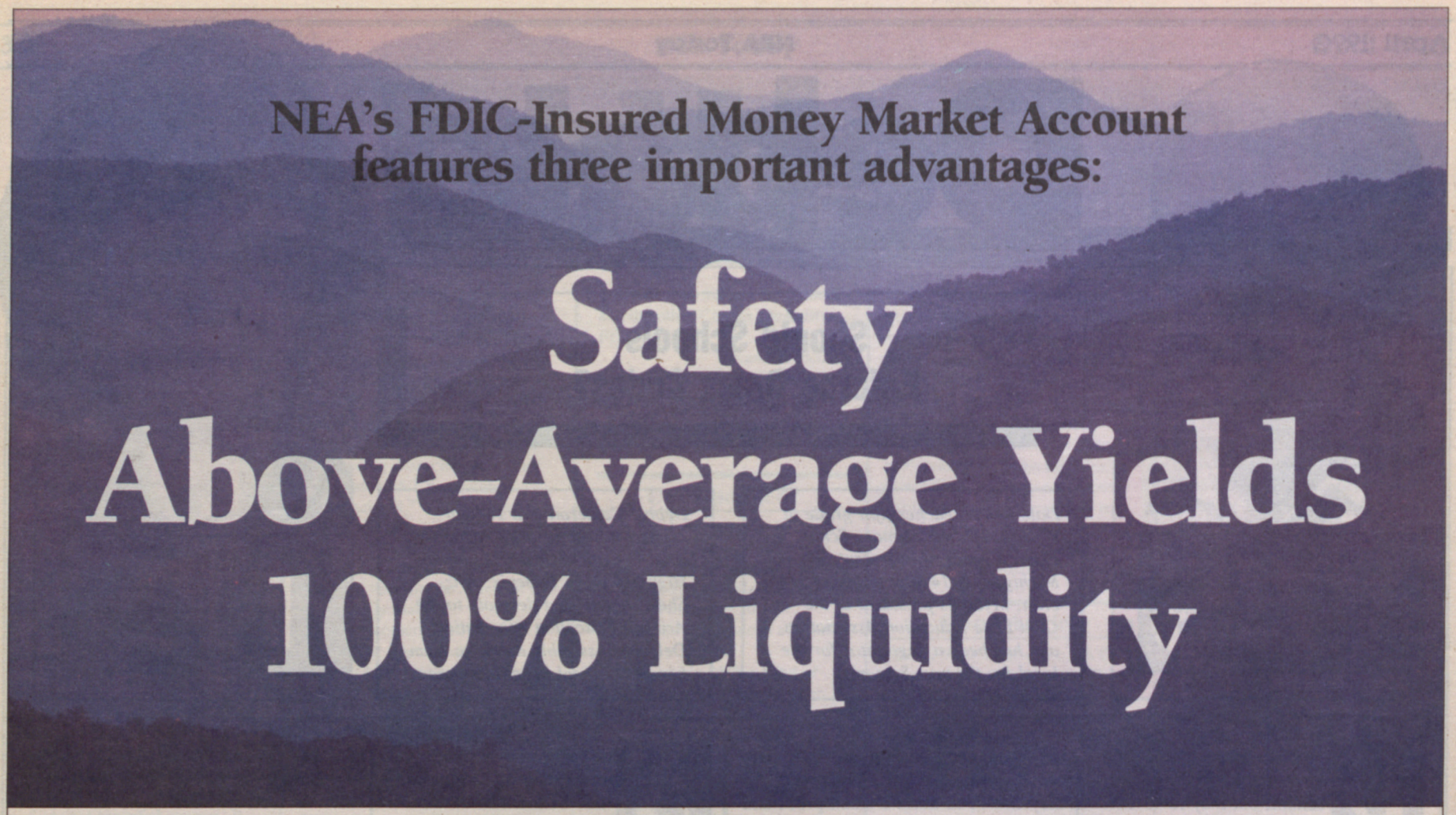
Enactment of a dress code has some more formal disadvantages. It might turn out to be a violation of students' constitutional rights and result in legal battles pitting parents or students against school districts.

And even if enactment and inauguration of the code went smoothly, enforcement could perpetually present difficulties. Would school employees be able to enforce the code equally for ALL students in the school? For instance, how many teachers would send a relative of noted lawyer Melvin Belli to the office because his hair was too long?

I do, however, feel the schools need some authority in order to be able to carry out their mission of education. For instance, any behavior—including mode of dress—that can cause harm to anyone shouldn't be allowed in schools. And a mode of dress can cause harm in the case of gang-related clothing.

Any offensive patterns of dress, like profane language on clothing or clothing that allows indecent exposure, should also be regulated.

But these infractions can be handled on an individual basis as they come up. There's no need to institute extensive dress codes that students view as punitive—and that I view as major roadblocks in teaching kids to love learning.



NEA's FDIC-Insured Money Market Account features three important advantages:

Safety
Above-Average Yields
100% Liquidity

Now, your money can earn consistently higher returns without being tied up for many months!

The NEA has developed an exclusive money market account that we believe gives you more valuable benefits than you'll find anywhere else today.

Your money earns higher rates than most conventional savings accounts and money market mutual funds, yet it's always accessible (unlike certificates of deposit that lock your money in for three months or longer); your account is FDIC insured up to $100,000 per depositor (unlike money market mutual funds); and each account is serviced by your own Personal Banking Representative via a toll-free number.

If you want your money to work at maximum efficiency, consider these significant advantages:

Above-Average Return — When your balance is $500 or more, NEA's FDIC-Insured Money Market Account pays .25% *above* the 7-Day Donoghue Money Market Fund Average™— the nationally recognized average of taxable money market mutual funds.

Bonus Interest — For the first 60 days your account is open, it will also earn an additional 1% annualized bonus interest.

Complete Liquidity — You can access your account by mail, toll-free phone call or free personalized checks. And, unlike a CD, there's no penalty for early withdrawal.

Low Minimum Investment — You can open an account with as little as $500 to earn above-average rates. You may make additional deposits in any amount.

Your Personal Banking Representative — Specially trained representatives are available to answer any questions at 1-800-345-0397 from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. EST Monday through Thursday, and from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST Friday. (For current rates and yields only, call our 24-hour-a-day toll-free line at 1-800-323-8257.)

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TMM040

☐ **YES,** I would like more information and an enrollment form for NEA's FDIC-Insured Money Market Account.

NAME _____

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ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

IS THIS A NEW ADDRESS? YES ___ NO ___

Mail to:
NEA Special Services Response Center
51 Monroe Street, Suite 200
Rockville, Maryland 20850-2454